

PUBLIC HEARING

CHAIRPERSON: Senator Douglas McCrory,
Representative Robert
Sanchez

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Lesser, Winfield

REPRESENTATIVES: McCarty, Barry,
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Candelaria, Cook, Currey,
Devlin, Farnen, Genga,
Gibson, Gilchrest, Haines,
Hill, Johnson, Kennedy,
Kokoruda, Lavielle, Lemar,
MacLachlan, McGee, Miller,
Napoli, Pavalock-D'Amato,
Rotella, Simanski

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): -- to adjournment of the
Education Committee meeting and we will be moving on
public hearing in a few minutes.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Good afternoon everyone.
We're here to convene the Public Hearing, Education
Public Hearing. So for your first timers, I'm going
to go over the rules and for you old seasoned folks,
you know what I'm going to say. So I'm going to be
very clear because I don't any ambiguity when we
walk out of here and don't understand what we're
supposed to be doing here. This is a public hearing
and we're here to listen to the public. Now some of
you were here Friday and we had a mess up and I have
talked to my colleagues and we got it all
straightened out. So it was all hugs and kisses.

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The reason why I say that is because people come up here early in the morning to sign up to speak and they only have two minutes to speak. So this is an opportunity for us to hear from the public. We, around this circle, we can talk to our Commissioners anytime we want, so this is not the place to have a dialogue with Commissioners or other folks. This is an opportunity for the public to address us. So with that being said, this is how we work this Committee.

You have two minutes to come up and testify, two minutes. Once you hear this bell, example of the bell. Come on now you know we do this all the time. [Ringing] So once you hear that, that is a signal for the next words to come out of your mouth are, therefore in conclusion or I will summarize, okay. That's when you're finishing up. Now if you go too far, you're going to hear it again and then I'm going to stop you. So are we all clear about the rules? Any questions? I'm going to use my teacher; raise your hand if you have a question. No questions. I didn't see you in the back. Okay. [Laughing] First up we'll have Commissioner Miguel Cardona. So for the first hour of this meeting we'll hear from our Commissioners and I'll make sure we get this done in an hour and then we'll go back and forth between the public and our officials. Commissioner, you have the floor.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator and members of the Education Committee. I am Miguel Cardona, Commissioner of Education, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to testify before you today. You have my extensive written testimony so I will use this time to address four Bills on your agenda.

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Senate Bill 390, AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. As you know, over the last five years, the department has made minority teacher recruitment and retention one of our top priorities. We have engaged in many efforts, with the Committee's help and direction, and have carried out several non-statutory policy changes as well in collaboration with the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force and with the guidance of the Minority Teacher Recruitment and Policy Oversight Council within the department. We are always supportive of any initiatives to increase the number of minority teachers in our state. We would suggest however, some modifications to this proposal.

In Section 1, we believe 10 percent of funds received in excess of the funding received in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 should be set aside for covering the costs associated with MTR efforts. We also believe there should be language outlining the establishment of a target/goal that is proportional to the number of potential candidates each Alliance District has. Lastly, we would suggest reconstituting the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force or the Department's Minority Teacher Recruitment and Policy Oversight Council instead of creating a third entity that is focused on MTR efforts. We also believe the first reporting deadline should be moved to July 1, 2021, in order to give the Task Force a realistic amount of time to work on these new charges. I do want to share the pride we have at the agency to announce that Dr. Shuana Tucker is joining our team as the Chief Talent Office who has extensive experience in pipeline programming, and just wanted to share that.

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HB 5436, AN ACT PROHIBITING SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES THAT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST STUDENTS BASED ON NATURAL HAIR AND HAIRSTYLES. The department fully supports this proposal. The incident that occurred in New Jersey, when an African American student was forced to cut his dreadlocks in order to participate in a wrestling match, should never happen in our state or anywhere. We would ask for language to be included that specifically addresses the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System as well as any other school with programs that utilize potentially hazardous operational equipment. In those cases, an instructor should have the ability to require a student to utilize safety equipment such as a hairnet that would protect hair from the dangers associated with that equipment. And the same would apply to culinary programs, where covering hair and beards are important for food safety reasons. We appreciate you taking our request into consideration as this bill moves forward.

Senate Bill 313, AN ACT RECONSTITUTING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP TASK FORCE. The department is in full support of this proposal and stands ready to collaborate with the task force partners in the creation of a new master plan to eliminate educational opportunity gaps while also taking advantage of the recommendations that were made in the old plan.

HB 5214, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AT TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND CAREER SCHOOLS. The Department believes very strongly that all public schools should be available to all students, regardless of their special education needs, and is in full support the objective of this proposal. The legislature may wish to consider removing all of 10-

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76q and not just subsection (c), which addresses the planning and placement team, to be clear that the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) is simply held to the same expectations as other local educational agencies. While we do support this proposal and encourage its passage, we must acknowledge that it will likely result in additional costs to the system for both staffing and resources and we avail our Chief Financial Officer and our fiscal team to support CTECS as they revisit how they pay for some of these shifts. Thank you for allowing me to testify and I look forward to working with you this session, and I'm happy to take any questions you may have.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. You mentioned in the MRR, there was a section you said we'll be duplicating some of the things that we're already doing in to reinvigorate a hold. Can you speak specifically to that? I didn't catch the part but -
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COMMISSIONER CARDONA: There was a recommendation about putting together a group to study teacher retention and I think those efforts could be embraced under the work, under the MTR oversight to see teacher retention patterns in the state of Connecticut where the -- where the exploration but I wonder if that effort would be duplicative of some of the work of the MTR Council.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So we just -- so basically you're saying we need to bring back the MTR Oversight Committee and some of the work of the MRT Oversight Committee, teacher retention and recouplement can follow under that; is that what you're suggesting?

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COMMISSIONER CARDONA: The teacher recruitment and retention should fall under that. As you know, the teacher profession, it's not just about recruiting but making sure that we have environments where they stay teaching and don't leave the profession.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay, thank you. Any questions for the Commissioner? Representative Lemar.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and welcome Commissioner, it's always good to see you.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I have just a point maybe that we can look for clarification. I brought it up before and very favorable -- this Bill is looking more at some of the alliance districts as we look at retention and certification. But my understanding in the past that we had quite a few minority teachers that received certification and if we could just maybe get a report as well as to what happened with those -- maybe that will be taken up in part of this Bill, but to look as to why those teachers -- why they didn't remain with us. That's one question.

And then secondly, I do appreciate very much your comments on House Bill 5214, the special ed piece with the technical schools and we're very fortunate to have you having experience in both the tech ed schools and with our traditional schools but -- and you -- I guess I'm asking you to just speak a little more to that if you would and how you can see that working through.

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COMMISSIONER CARDONA: So the technical CTECS being a public school should much like any other district, look to provide accommodations for students with exceptionalities and what we're asking is that that conversation happen much like it would in any other district. So that's -- that's something I feel pretty passionately about. Every school is required to make modifications for students, especially high schools. We have CTE programs that have to make modifications if there's equipment that could be dangerous. So I believe it's important that the CTECS system does as well.

And if you recall last week when -- when I testified here, we're also thinking about a potential transition to independence with the CTECS, so ensuring that they're following the same protocols as every other district is something that's important to me.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions?
Representative.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Good afternoon, Commission. So I have a couple of questions. In regards to the MTR Bill, and I was walking around so I didn't catch it, I think you said something about 10 percent but you know, it talks specifically about alliance districts are required to provided a plan, 2 FTE regarding the expenditure of the increased fund from year 12 -- would this 20 percent increase from FY 21 be excluded from that plan? We're talking about that 20 -- to cover the program in regards to I think the private program that we have in MTR. And

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I think you said something about 10 percent. Were you -- were you talking about this?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: I was, yes.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: So number one, we're fully supportive and I think if we don't make structural changes to how we're expecting resources to be used then it's less likely that it's going to happen. But we felt 10 percent was more reasonable given the ECS shifts and the requirements for districts to also, under the alliance improvement requirements provide intervention services or provide more opportunities for students with social workers and those types of things. I think having it at 20 percent would limit the ability for district to meet needs of students in other areas. We felt 10 percent sends a message that you have to prioritize this, but also doesn't put an undue burden on whatever increases are needed to meet the other demands of the students in the alliance districts.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay, thank you. On SB No. 392, which is establishing a personal financial management pilot program; will there be a cost to FE to do this? And I know there's two Bills here.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: One I know will cost. [Laughing] So first and foremost, we know that for our students to -- to be well rounded and be successful contributors to society they need to have some background and financial -- personal finance. We appreciate that this is less of a -- of a requirement of a course, a graduation course. We're more likely to be able to work with -- to continue to work with the Education Committee to find a way

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that we can support this. Will there be a cost? I mean time is a cost, right. So we would take our existing staff and try to add this to the list of priorities that they have in addition to the other curricular needs. With that said I'll say in the same breath, we do believe that personal finance management is something that our students should be exposed to.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. And my last question is in regards to HB 390, I mean SB 393, which is the Establishing a Process of Removal of a Member of the Board of Education. Do you know if there's presently a procedure in any of the towns to remove a Board of Education member?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Off the top of my head, I don't have any details on it but I can get that for you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay. And do you have any idea what types of things would cause a Board Member to be removed from?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: So I don't have specific information on what would constitute -- what should constitute consideration. What I will say is, I mentioned Friday, part of the framework that we want to develop out of our agency is some expectation of -- of what the role of the Boards are. How we as an agency can support Boards to work toward that end, which is ultimately student outcomes, and making sure that the focus of the Board is on students. But also identify dysfunction Boards and be more proactive in our efforts to make sure that we're holding them accountable to be good stewards of the funding that you provide and the guidance that we provide. So definitely interested in having more

conversations about that, and I can get more information specifically to your question.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay. And I'm in -- I'm in agreement to a certain point. You want also to have Board Members to be mentors, good mentors and -- and I -- I -- you know I agree and I support this Bill. That's it, I'm all set, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you, Mr. Commissioner for being here today and your testimony. I just wanted to follow up quickly on the Senate Bill 313, the -- AN ACT RECONSTITUTING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP. I think we're trying to dub it now, opportunity gap. And it's something I've been watching for some time and I have been looking at trying to analyze all -- just all the alliance districts as a general rule have been underfunded with respect to the ECS formula. So when you take that into consideration and the wealth of the communities that are in an achievement gap/alliance districts also the available resources to the town in general, are we going to maybe take a look at a formula that would kind of mirror or somehow reflect what we do or what we've been trying to do since Horton vs. Meskel on the -- on the achieve -- on the pilot money and the resources available based on the family income and that sort of thing when we look at the opportunity gap that we have in this state.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you for the question. This one is near and dear to me. The - the achievement gap task force was established in 2010, 2011 and I was asked by then Speaker of the House, Chris Donovan to serve as a Co-Chair. For five

years we tried to develop a plan that was inclusive of what schools need to do to address disparities and achievements in their buildings, but also take a wider lens and say, how do housing -- you know how does housing and security or housing patterns that concentrate poverty in 30 communities effect outcome for students. How does access to -- or lack of access to healthcare effect student's conditions and ability to learn, food insecurity. So if you notice the task force report that was submitted in 2014 had policy recommendations outside of the school house, right. And some of those things are under way.

We do have an interagency task force lead by the Lieutenant Governor to look at these factors, DCF, DSS, we're all around the table. So to your -- to answer your questions, yes, we need to make sure that this group looks at schoolhouse factors, but also factors that are outside of the control of superintendents and districts, but ultimately can impact student's ability to learn.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Great, thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And if I may just ask, earlier in the week you testified about the framework that you were putting in place and do you see this -- this work with the achievement task force, the opportunity gap; do you see those two working together?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: I see it informing the work that we do within the schoolhouse more, but yes, when we're talking about parental engagement and

when we're talking about access to, let's say behavioral health support for students, we can't -- we can't ignore the fact that for many students getting access to that is much harder. So those are factors that will definitely bring in the framework and will allow us to get a better landscape analysis of what's working and what's not working, and hopefully replicate good practices. To answer your question in short, yes.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So any other questions? So I'll just finish, a comment real quick. In regards to the MTR and 20 percent; the reason why that was put in, I'll be quite frank, although we passed this Bill last year we didn't put any funding towards it. And once -- and in here if you pass a Bill and don't put money attached to it, it won't get done. And what I also realized is, if we don't require school districts to do something they're not going to do it. So that's why that number, 20 percent was put there. Now it might be a little large; that's something to negotiate, but we're going to put some funding. We're going to put our money where our mouth is because we know this is very important.

Secondly, in regards -- Representative McCarty mentioned about there are over 200 and something minority teachers that are not employed in the state of Connecticut, which I find to be very troublesome when we know what the data suggests. I think we need to find out why. I can give you anecdotal answers how they were told, you're not a good fit along with a host of other things but that thinking is the reason why we have the situation that we have today. So yes, we need to find out why these people

are not being employed and what the school districts going to do about it.

And lastly, in regards to removal of a Board Member. I believe any other elected official can be removed from their position by a vote of two-thirds of the body except for Board Members -- Board of Education Members and that is the reason why we have this here. So -- and most people probably don't realize that, that you know -- and like you mentioned last week, we can give your school district as much money as you want but you can't operate as a Board appropriately to make sure those dollars are allocated to the right spot, we'll be pouring good money into bad money and we need to stop doing that. So Commissioner, I appreciate you for your testimony and enjoy the rest of your day.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you, sir.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Next up we have from DAS, Erin O'Brien to testify for the Commissioner.

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty and distinguished members of the Committee on Education. My name is Erin O'Brien Choquette and I am the Director of the DAS, Department of Administrative Services Legal and Legislative Programs. I'm here on behalf of Commission Josh Gebelle who was very sorry not to be here today. Unfortunately today as has been for the past week, he's completely booked with COVID-19 planning and meetings sort of taking over his life. So instead I'm here today to express DAS' support for Senate Bill 394, AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZING OF STATE

GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AND REVISIONS TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT STATUTES.

Senate Bill 394 authorizes the 12 school construction projects that were reviewed by DAS and submitted to the School Construction Priority List Committee. As Commission Gebelle testified at the January hearing of the School Construction Priority list, this list consists of 10 elementary schools, a middle school and one high school. Four of these projects are new schools, five are renovation projects and three are extension alteration projects. We believe that these are good projects. They full merit the legislative report and we recommend your approval of Senate Bill 394.

I'm also here to explain why DAS does not support House Bill 5435. House Bill 5435 would purohit the Commissioner of DAS from delegating authority to administer the School Building Projects Grant Program to the Office of Policy and Management. And it also seeks to require DAS to develop and maintain an electronic database of information related to school construction projects on our website. As you all know, DAS and OPM did enter into an MOU last fall to move the physical location of the stand alone school constructions grant unit or the program together with existing staff to OPM. Please note that Commissioner Gebelle has not delegated his authority to administer the program to OPM. That authority remains with the Commissioner of DAS unless and until the Legislature approves the statutory changes proposed by the Governor and Senate Bill 8.

DAS does believe that OPM is the correct agency to host the School Construction Grants Program because

we believe that that program is really more aligned to the municipal grants programs that OPM already administers. House Bill 5435 also directs DAS to post online very detailed information about all school construction projects since 2000. At the present time DAS is unable to provide the information requested or required in Section 2 of this Bill. We do post our priority lists on line every year, but the system that we have would need to be completely changed in order for DAS to obtain the additional information requested in this Bill and to post it in a coherent and searchable format. Developing a website with that kind of information would require significant staff resources and IT investment which has not been contemplated in our budget. For these reasons the Department of Administrative Services urges the Committee to reject House Bill 5435. Thank you for listening to our testimony and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. First question. Looking at the school building projects currently we have here, how does this list compare to the lists in the past?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: It's a very small list. The -- I don't -- I don't recall and I apologize for not double checking to see, I think it's about the same size as we had last year. It's within one or two projects of what we had last year. It's significantly smaller than the project that we have -- that DAS has presented in years past.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Were any projects requested that did not make this list?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: No, the -- all -- all projects that went through the application process and were supported by the school districts through the approval process were included on this list. There are times when towns reach out but are not ready to go, and so the school construction staff will work with them and explain why they're not ready to go; they don't have the -- the -- all the ducks in a row so those don't go forward, but anything that made its way through the application process is on the list.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and in regards to 5435, are there any other MOUs or contractual agreements that will be affected by this legislation, are you aware of?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: This specific legislation would not effect any MOUs beyond the one that we currently have with OPM about the School Construction Grants Project. It's our understanding that this legislation is specific just to that one -- that one -- one unit.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): My other followup question would be, why isn't there any -- already a public available database that details the school construction in the past? How come we don't have this, how come the public doesn't know about school construction projects that we've done within the last year or two or five years?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: So the priority lists are available online, so they know -- it's easy for members of the public to see what has been passed into school priority on the school priority list. The legislation seeks much more detailed information including start dates, finish dates, total project

costs, detailed about the project costs. That information DAS has in a variety of formats including an old computer system and we've -- which we've just recently migrated to the core CT system, which is the state's financial accounting system. But all of the data that we receive, we receive in the format needed for us to approve the project and to make the payments, so it's all sort of imbedded in these financial systems which necessarily have a great deal of security around them and we can't just open access to that.

So historically we just haven't -- State Department of Education didn't have a website, we didn't have a website that allowed for us to post this information in a readily, readable, coherent, searchable fashion. We're still working on the core migration so that all the data that we feel that we need to make the system work better is being developed, but it's still very much about how to administer the program and not -- in the format that is user friendly for the public.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So in essence you do have all this data, you just don't -- you just don't currently have a way to post it on your website.

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: We have some of the data. We have certain -- we -- for example, we do have data because we need to make the progress payments to the schools. That's in one financial system. We do have the priority list information in another system. The applications are in a third system. So there's bits and bites of data sort of scattered around that require a lot of manual effort to put together.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Right. So, and I don't want to belabor the point, I want to move on but there's some things that I think the public should know. Start date, end date, costs, those things are probably important to communities who are you know paying for a number of these projects so maybe we can limit the scope of what we're asking for in this piece of legislation and make it a little easier for you. That's just my comments here, you don't have to respond to it. Any other questions from the Committee? Representative Sanchez.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regards to HB 5435. Is there a present statute that states that it's the Department of Administrative Services that administers and is responsible for school building projects and grants presently?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: Yes.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay. So if the Department of Administrative Services and OPM went into an agreement with an MOU, didn't they actually break the law?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: We did not break the law because we did not transfer the overall responsibility for the program to OPM. We simply -- and the staff are still DAS staff with the exception of (inaudible - 00:29:38) who is acting as both Deputy Security at OPM and the Acting Director of this program. So the responsibilities that Commissioner Gebelle has for statutes he has maintained but as with most programs the day to day work is being done by the staff, most of -- all but one of whom are still DAS employees who do the day to day work and then any decisions that are required

by statute to be made by Commissioner Gebelle
continue to be made by Commissioner Gebelle.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): So presently how many staff
members do you have that work on school construction
projects and grant programs?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: 17.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And are all those 17 still at
DAS or have they all been moved to OPM?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: They are all still DAS
employees but they are physically located in --
within the OPM space on Capital Avenue.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay. Well, I have an issue
with that and that is that we -- both Co-Chairs on
Committee and this legislative body was not
consulted when this MOU happened, so that's why I'm
asking these questions. And I have some serious
questions about that, and this is why we have this
Bill in front of us today. And I have no more
questions.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any questions from the
Committee? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And
just again, can you just explain again specifically
why this action is taking place so I have a better
understanding of why we would be moving this
administration over to OPM. I know it's not only
the concern of this Committee but I've heard from my
many different individuals about their concern and
just really trying to understand -- I think it's
occurring in other places, but just wondering why on
the school construction, why this is moving to OPM.

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: Thank you for that question. So the School Constructions Grants Program came to DAS from the State Department of Education as a result of Governor Malloy's proposed restructuring of state government back in 2012, right. And it actually took a little bit of time, we didn't get them right away. We got them in 2014. Ever since they were within DAS they were a stand-alone, self-contained unit. They were not part of our construction services at all for the entire time that it's been within DAS. It's been a self-contained unit.

With this new administration there's been an effort to realign functions and try to put like with like and the Schools Construction Grant Unit notwithstanding the reference to construction units named is really a municipal grant program. It really doesn't interact with our construction services at all and so this administration felt that it made more sense to put it with OPM with the other municipal grant programs. So that was the intent for the proposal. In terms of having the staff move over to sit with OPM, we were -- we maintained the responsibility within DAS but the Director was moving over to OPM and he's actually a very good Director, he's done a lot of really great things with the program, we felt it made sense for him to continue having supervisory role over the staff and OPM had room for them; while we're trying to reorganize our space at 450. The -- the room that they used to sit in is now being occupied by a digital government team so we just wanted to -- we didn't want to have to move them twice. So we did try and advance that move. But we do recognize that this is ultimately the legislature's decision. If

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the legislature grants Senate Bill 8 then the authority will be officially transferred. If the Bill doesn't go forward, we recognize that limitation as well.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay, so -- if I may, hypothetically if it were -- let's just imagine it were to go through; how does that then change the legislature's role in the approval when we have a construction grant list in front of us, we have an opportunity to ask questions and talk about it and the approval. Does this move over to OPM limit that in any way?

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: Not at all. There would be no difference whatsoever in terms of the legislature's role with regard to the grant -- to the projects that are approved. The standing language that is ultimately approved through legislation. Just as when it moved from education to DAS, there was no change in terms of the legislature's role, there would be no change if it moves from DAS to OPM.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you, Commissioner.

ERIN O'BRIEN CHOQUETTE: Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Next up we have Steven Hernandez, Commissioner. Before you begin, Mr. Hernandez. I explained to the audience what happened Friday and was no disrespect toward you and your commentary with my colleague. I just communicated that this is a public hearing and the public waits for hours to get up to do their testimony and I just felt as though my colleague and

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you guys work here every single day; you can have that conversation privately and let the public come up and testify. So it was no disrespect to you. We made up, hugs and kisses, I want to give you a hug and a kiss also. [Laughing]

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So with that said, go ahead and do your two minutes. [Laughing]

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: I accept it. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, ranking and other distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Steven Hernandez, Executive Director of the Legislature's Nonpartisan Commission. I wanted to focus -- I've submitted for the record testimony on several Bills, but I really do want to focus on the -- on the Bill regarding the achievement gap, the reinstatement of what you will call the Opportunity Gap Task Force.

I just want to say several years ago, if you recall there was the -- I think this was around 2011, there was created an Achievement Gap Task Force. The Achievement Gap Task Force was to try and figure out why it was that Connecticut was leading the nation in the gap between kids of color and the poor and general population children in terms of achievement, in terms of scores, mostly around reading. What as a result of testimony -- what was tones of testimony on the issue, what the Achievement Gap Task Force ultimately found in a master plan report that was submitted in 2014 was that the real issue had less with rigor, less to do with -- with teacher quality or leader quality and more to do with an opportunity gap. So the recommendation of the report if you recall had to do with inside and outside of the

schoolhouse strategies. Also strategies about how it was that we should resource the opportunity gap in a long-term and consistent way.

One of the -- one of the -- one of the legacies of the achievement gap is our two-gen work. Two-gen sprouted directly from that. Another one is the Social Emotional Learning Collaborative because we understood that lack of the skillset was also keeping kids from learning in an academic environment. So I think reconstituting this opportunity Gap Task Force at this time is the right thing to do for several reasons. You should know that on the writing group of the original Achievement Gap Task group of the master plan was, now Commissioner Miguel Cardona. Also on that writing group was yours truly, the Executive Director of this Commission and several other people who had a -- a global view of the real impacts of keeping kids behind.

You know I could -- I have submitted in the record the facts that lead to the creation of the original task force, the gap, the number, the depth of the problem. Very little has changed. We are now in 2020 when the gap was to have been closed and the gap persists. So this is an all hands on deck strategy. I can tell you that the reason that the gap hasn't closed quite frankly is that the very systems that drive children to enter school with a gap are keeping us from alleviating the gap once we have children in our midst and that is hunger and security, housing and security, lack of access to trauma informed best practices, all of the things that we know keep families and children from succeeding. So without any further I would open up

to questions from you on this and any of the other Bills that we've submitted for. Thank you, sir.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, Commissioner and thank you for your testimony. I'll just ask because I've actually got to run upstairs for a meeting and come back, so language is very important. So no longer will we use this term achievement gap, 'cause it has negative confrontation when you're comparing different ethnic groups. There's no difference, right. There's more of an opportunity so the term that we're going to use now, we're going to educate everyone who is here and listening, we're going to use the term opportunity gap as we move forward, specifically for the things you just mentioned. That's all I have to say. Any questions for the Commissioner? Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Very quickly. I will follow up with a question to you just like I asked the Commissioner with respect to the overall circumstances in the community, where we have alliance, district schools, not just the personal circumstances but also the resource availability in those districts. Would you have any of that information?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Sure, you know what's really peculiar about the way that we fund our educational system in the state of Connecticut is that there's a -- there is a baked in catch-22 for a lot of our communities. We fund through our local resources and unfortunately it is in exactly the places where we need resource the most that we have the least access to local resource. The tax bases are diminished for reasons that are historical. By historical I mean red-lining, by historical I mean

concentrate -- the concentration, the intentional concentration of poverty and the intentional concentration of systemic racism so all of those -- the confluence of those reasons have really now lead to a perpetuation of a system that really has to be undone in order to be done correctly.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Just quickly, the erosion of tax base is particularly -- also have a history that goes back to federal changes in the tax laws.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: That's right.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and welcome. It's good to see you. I know you're doing a lot of work with the social/emotional collaborative and other entities. So for this master plan do you -- is there anyone that should be invited on this task force that's currently not there? I know you mentioned we have so much that we need to look at to improve the opportunity gap with -- between the social and emotional learning and the trauma informed practices and we talked about homelessness and other -- but is there any -- can you make any recommendations to us as to where we should be looking?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Now there's a lot of great work that's happening with a lot of the constituents, at least the constituent providers of education, trauma informed practice and the social/emotional learning collaborative. I would you know -- and I know that the Department of Education will be a key component of this work. I -- I also know that this Commission will have some role on this task force. I would ask

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perhaps that you consider including the -- the head of SEL for CT. The reason is that SEL for CT is a new -- the newest grass roots social/emotional learning participant for the state of Connecticut, organizing practitioners on the ground who are dealing with so many of these issues including trauma informed practice, hunger and security, housing and security; so I would ask that they -- that you consider also adding SEL for CT as a participant in this work.

There are -- there are other education equity organizations in the state of Connecticut. I can give you a list. A couple that come to mind are educational equity organizations that are working in Connecticut. So I can -- I can actually provide that list if you'd like.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): I think that would be helpful, thank you very much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Anymore questions?
Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Commissioner. I really appreciated listening to your testimony and I just wanted to ask you some further questions primarily for my understanding about what you were talking about with opportunity zones. And so if I heard you correctly, there was a task force at whatever point that implemented or that offered recommendations. And they were adhered to or not adhered to but I think your point was, we really haven't made any progress. And is that because things that have been tried either haven't worked or we haven't been trying the right things or there are some things that have been working but the populations are increasing. Like

what do you see -- and I know you've mentioned food and housing insecurity but what are we really missing here? What have we -- have we just not done anything, or are we doing the right wrong things or not enough? I'd like to understand better.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Luckily in certain -- in certain areas we know what to do and we know that it works. So for instance, one of the recommendations from the master plan on closing the achievement gap was K to 3 Literacy Initiative. As you know we now have CD3LI, which is the K to 3 Literacy Initiative for the state of Connecticut. The question there isn't whether or not it works, it's whether or not it's resourced. So if you recall when CK3LI was first instituted we found that in order to make the biggest impact, which is a full deployment of the right number of literacy coaches, literacy trainers and on the ground practitioners who could close the gap in literacy at the very least, we would -- it would cost millions of dollars, millions. And so the state of Connecticut at the time just found that it didn't have those millions of dollars.

So what it did is it created a pilot and the pilot was five schools. That pilot has now become 37 schools in districts all over the state and not only that, there is a statewide literacy initiative that mirrors that for all schools in the state of Connecticut not just alliance. It's working. There just isn't enough resource attributed to that. The state -- I'll give you an example of what -- we also know that when people are not hungry, when people have housing security, when people have the right resources that meet the family where they are, that works as well and it works by helping lift families sustainably out of poverty. What we found in the

Two-Gen work was that the biggest impediment to people becoming self sufficient was benefit clips. And what that means is that our families realize that if they took one more dollar in -- if they took one more class in training in order to be able to better their situation, sure, they might make another dollar. They may get a raise but they would lose vital benefits on their way to self-sufficiency. So what we're doing now on the benefit side is we're actually building bridges across those cliffs.

All this is to say, it's not that we don't know what works, it's that it takes a full court press effort in order to ensure that it's sustainable because most of our families don't want to be poor and most of our families want to be able to take care of themselves in a sustainable meaningful way.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, that was very helpful. I appreciate your answer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Anymore questions? Thank you, Commissioner.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, thank you very much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Next I have Representative Teri Wood. Good afternoon.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory I believe is in the other room, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel, thank you for hearing my testimony today on Special Ed on House Bill 5433, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SPECIAL ED COST COOPERATIVES. My name is Teri Wood, I'm the State Representative for Norwalk and Darien and with your permission I

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would like to yield my time to constituent, Sara Parent, Julie Best and Stacy Tie.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And just for the record, when you come up can you state your full name so that we can record, thank you.

SARA PARENT: Chairman McCrory in the other room, Representative Sanchez, Ranking Members and other members of the Education Committee, good afternoon. And thank you to Representative Wood for yielding your time to us. My name is Sara Parent and this is Julie Best and Stacy Tie. Julie and I are the Co-Chairs of the Council of Darien and School Parents. Our mission is to promote understanding and communication between the Darien Public Schools Board of Education, Darien families and the broader community with the goal of uniting so that our children can achieve their individual potential. We are concerned about HB 5433, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION EXCESS COST COOPERATIVE, and ask you not to support it.

As drafted this Bill would not benefit the children of Connecticut. We fully recognize the need to solve a real funding issue in the state, but we believe that a proposed change in funding has the potentially to negatively affect student outcomes.

JULIE BEST: Towns like ours in good financial shape would like receive less funding from the state than at present if this Bill were to move forward. This loss of funding would have to be covered by either raising taxes or taking funds from other areas. This could mean fewer dollars for existing programs and/or the lack of funding for new and innovative programming meaning reductions like these would negatively impact all -- impact all students. We

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cannot afford to let budget outcomes outweigh student outcomes and we ask that you redirect efforts towards solving issue at the state level rather than putting more burden on the individual communities.

STACY TIE: I am the Chair of the Special Education Subcommittee of the Council for Darien School Parents. Our subcommittee was born out of the period of time when Darien went outside elected officials and started putting fiscal pressure on the board of education special education budget. This lead to a time in our district with noncompliance in special education. Following a state investigation and significant investment of town dollars Darien is back on track. As move forward we are mindful the lessons past. Special education funding cannot be looked at in isolation but rather in connection with student outcomes. It is very concerning that HB 5433 does just that. It attempts to solve for one problem an unpredictability and excess cost expenditures without taking into account children.

The proposed Bill with its lack of clarity about formulas that will be used has no guarantee of being fiscally sound. But more importantly it could have unintentional educational consequences. It could influence PPT process including services being recommended and the number of students being identified as requiring special education services. It happened in our town and it could happen in our state. This could also feed into a divisive narrative, which is another lesson Darien learned. It is positioned students with disabilities against all other students and with the addition of a likely ability to pay component being added to the

equation, the Bill could very much divide the state by area code. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, that was great. All of you at the same time. Do you have any idea what it would cost or how much funding Darien would lose?

SARA PARENT: I think without a formula -- a specific formula it's hard to know. I mean --

JULIE BEST: It seems pretty unclear at this point. It think our general concern, it's like it's being rushed through and that the communities haven't necessarily been involved in the conversation and especially if we'll be taking on more and more of the burden we would need to be -- or would like to be more involved in the discussion.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay. Any questions? Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for being here today and I appreciate your comments on this. I will push back a little in that the state has not been rushed through this actually. There was a whole task force, some conversations, the proponents of this Bill have gone and met with everybody under the sun who is willing to sit down with them, but I do hear your concerns. And I guess my question for you is, I think in your testimony you talked about the community receiving less money because -- if this were implemented. What makes you believe that you would receive less money because of this?

JULIE BEST: Well my understanding is that the ability to pay and the formula included would determine which towns receive what percentage of

excess cost reimbursement and as a town that I would imagine would be evaluated to have a relatively decent ability to pay, that the town of Darien would in fact receive a lesser percentage of reimbursement.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Okay. So I'll -- I'll hopefully clear up some of your fears there. Under this model you would actually receive back 100 percent of your reimbursement. We're solely talking about the share is that your community would be contributing from the municipal side of things, not necessarily from your Board of Education side of things. But again the reimbursements would be 100 percent back to your Board of Education directly. So I think there's just some confusion as to what this is and what this isn't, and if this is something that you are interested in learning a little bit more about we're happy to come out and sit down with you and have that conversation just to be able to clear up some of the misconceptions that are out there. 'Cause I can see by the look on your face, yeah, it's a lot. [Laughing] It's something new and it's something different but I think it's important for us to be able to have this kind of a dialogue.

JULIE BEST: May I -- can I ask a followup question?

REP. CURREY (11TH): Absolutely.

JULIE BEST: So we have not received 100 percent reimbursement for some time now, so are you suggesting that we would actually get a greater percentage reimbursement [crosstalk].

REP. CURREY (11TH): Well, so if the state caps it at 72 percent, so [crosstalk].

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JULIE BEST: So that's to the cap?

REP. CURREY (11TH): Correct, yes.

JULIE BEST: Still at the cap? Thank you.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Absolutely. But -- but there are things worked in here where you may see some flexibility and have the opportunity where that cap actually may be increased. But again, we can -- we can have those conversations when you want and you can go through Representative Wood here if you'd like to have that conversation.

JULIE BEST: Thank you.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Yeah, absolutely.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Good afternoon. Thank you for coming up. We always like it when Representative Wood comes to visit us with her friends. [Laughing] I just wanted to ask you, how many students are in Darien, do you know?

SARA PARENT: About 4 -- mid 4,000.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): 4,000? Do you know how -- how much your ECS Grant is?

SARA PARENT: \$500,000.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Pardon me?

SARA PARENT: \$500,000.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): So was that about \$150 a student you get to educate them for the year; is that about right?

SARA PARENT: That sounds about right.

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REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): And that's an ECS? Okay. All right. I just wanted to know 'cause that's what everybody is afraid of. That number used to be so much higher for towns like yours and we're so afraid -- they've taken already the ECS most of it and now we're worried and rightfully so. So as we learn more about this project it will be interesting but a lot of towns, including mine are really worried about it because it's the only thing we're really getting anymore. I think what I'm getting, \$119 for each one of my students to educate them for a full year including a child with special needs that's under 90,000, \$119. But thank you for coming up.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Farmer.

REP. FARNEN (132ND): Thank you and thank you so much for being here today. I'd like to echo some of those concerns. You know we've seen in Fairfield is that our education funding from the state has come down and my concern is with a more consolidated state approach that will only likely increase the chance that those funds could potentially decrease further so I too would look to learn more and share your concern. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank -- oh, okay.
Representative Blumenthal.

REP. BLUMENTHAL (147TH): I don't have a question. I just wanted to thank you all for coming up and for your testimony today and for your questions and your interest and willingness in the process. I very much appreciate your engagement and advocacy.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Yes, thank you. It's very nice to Darien represented here today, I have to say

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that from my good -- my sister-in-law is the principal at Darien High School [laughing], in full disclosure. But if I -- if I may just say, this -- is part of your concern the formula for the way that a method that would be developed to -- if you -- I don't want to put words in your mouth but I think that's what I'm hearing, how that method would be developed through the community contribution. Is that -- is that your major concern?

SARA PARENT: Yes.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. Thank you very much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Let's see, next will be -- still a public speaker but then we'll be moving on to the public. Representative Tom Delnicki and Superintendent Kate Carter.

REP. DELNICKI (14TH): Good afternoon Chairs McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Member McCarty and members of the Education Committee. I am Representative Tom Delnicki and I represent the 14th House District South Windsor. I'm a former Board of Education member. I'm also a former Town Council member, former Deputy Mayor, former Mayor and now I'm up here. I'm joined by South Windsor Superintendent, Kate Carter and quite frankly one of the best superintendents I ever worked with. And we're here to speak with our concerns pertaining to raised bill 5433 and the impact it could very well have. And I'd like to turn the microphone over to Dr. Carter and have her make a few comments pertaining to the issue. Dr. Carter.

KATE CARTER: Thank you very much and thank you for the opportunity today. As was stated, my name is Kate Carter and I am the Superintendent of Schools

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in South Windsor. I have been a superintendent for ten years and I have never felt compelled to testify for or against any Bill until today. With countless bills proposed over the past decade it is noteworthy that HB 5433 is the only one that I have felt a moral imperative to speak out against. While it is true that South Windsor will be hurt financially by this Bill, please know it is not the loss of local funds that drove me to speak here today. If the unstated goal of this Bill is to redistribute wealth and take funds from communities such as South Windsor and redirect to communities with fewer resources, that is a legitimate discussion to be had.

We have a responsibility to view this matter, and all of our work in public education, through an equity lens. There are, however, far more transparent and less costly ways to redistribute education dollars. There is already a mechanism for that through ECS, and South Windsor is in fact losing funds through that mechanism. In comparison to other concerns around special education funding, predictability does not rise to the top. When districts were granted the ability to establish non-lapsing carryover funds, South Windsor immediately established a reserve fund for the sole and specific purpose of addressing volatility in special education costs. The forced participation in this non-voluntary Captive punishes districts that long ago enacted a remedy for volatility.

My larger objection to the Bill rests with the fact that this Captive will drive special education costs up for all communities. This Bill creates the conditions for private special education outplacement providers to capitalize on the lack of

local accountability. Once school leaders can shrug off special education costs as being out of their control and overseen by some vague, unaccountable entity, you will see private providers take advantage of that environment. Services for students won't improve, but the tuition bills will go up. All communities will be hurt by this dynamic. It is equally concerning that earlier Captive models were not exclusive to excess cost and I worry that the current language may return to this idea and expand its control over local boards of education and the taxpayer dollars for which they have oversight. The earlier models were a disincentive for fiscal responsibility and innovation. For example, South Windsor recently made a significant financial investment to provide in district supports for our students with mental health needs. Our investment not only provided improved services for students, but delivered these services in a more cost effective way. In the earlier Captive models those savings would not be realized locally. There would no longer be an incentive for staff to work hard on implementing these kinds of innovative programs when there is no direct benefit for our students. Imagine this dynamic compounded across the state.

In conclusion, while my main objection to this Bill is the unintended consequence of increasing special education costs for all communities while potentially decreasing services for students, I am also concerned about the lack of transparency associated with the bill as currently written. The Bill proposes language that exempts its financial oversight activities from the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. You must ask yourself,

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why would such an indefensible provision be included? I am also concerned with the speed with which this is being pushed through. I urge leaders to slow down and more closely examine the unintended consequences of HB 5433. Thank you for your time today.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hello, Superintendent. How are you?

KATE CARTER: Good, thank you.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Good, good. So I have the pleasure of also representing the fantastic community of South Windsor and I want to thank you for all that you do there. We have worked very closely together over the last few years on a number of great things and first off I wish you all the best of luck tomorrow. With regards to your testimony you mentioned that you're concerned with this being overseen by another entity. Can you clarify what you mean by -- what kind of oversight you -- you believe this to be?

KATE CARTER: So I think the concerns of my colleagues are around the uncertainty and the vagueness of the role of the Captive, in terms of what influence or oversight decision making has been made about ability to pay. You heard our earlier speakers reference that, and I think that's a concern. It's just we're -- it's unclear, and maybe it could be made clear but it's unclear to us what the impact will actually be financially. And as I mentioned earlier with ECS, regardless of whether, what your position is on the changes to that formula

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every district can see where we're going. We can see the impact and South Windsor is losing dollars but we can see that. I think the uncertainty around this is what's causing concern for me and my colleagues.

REP. CURREY (11TH): And do you believe that you and your colleagues likely know your districts probably better than many of the folks sitting around some of these tables here at the Capital?

KATE CARTER: I think that would probably be a fair statement. [Laughing]

REP. CURREY (11TH): Okay. Well then -- then I would hope though that understanding that the Board of Directors which will be heavily -- heavy on the side of your school and your town leaders who know your districts better would be the ones who are actually charged with coming up with that model would be, to hopefully kind of take care of some of the concerns that you all will be having or you currently have with the regards to the uncertainty of what this is and what this isn't.

KATE CARTER: I think that as that becomes clear, there were some concerns amongst my colleagues that the way it was written, it appeared that there may be less representation than what you're intending. I think there is a concern that there might be lack of expertise, whether that be special education directors, superintendents or other folks who may add to the expertise. I think the language that it may include Superintendents or other Board of Ed and it was called Municipal Groups, that there might be an under representation from educators who do follow this -- this matter really closely so I'm sure any

clarification on that point would be very comforting to my colleagues.

REP. CURREY (11TH): And I agree with you. The drafting of that, we definitely could made that and will make that much more clearer. The intent I believe is 8 out of the folks -- 8 out of the 16 or 18 seats that we have there now would currently -- are intended for your superintendents, your finance director at your board level and I know there was some language in there that also has some folks questioning things because if you're involved with PVTs you wouldn't be able to be part of this and so that would almost automatically exclude a number of your folks, that definitely is not our intent either.

And given the fact that this Cooperative is essentially cutting a check to your Boards of Educations, I think with regards to the transparency, this is getting to the transparency piece that you spoke about -- the fact that they're cutting the checks, all of the -- all of the things that are likely in question as to what would be reliable, is also happening at the State Department of Education, whether that is questioning if something was approved or denied, and the process in which they all go through. So again, it's simply acting as that safeguard through your districts to be able to cut that check if you have that one student who moves in and kind of throws everything out of whack. But I appreciate you coming out today and I won't hit you too hard today.

KATE CARTER: Well, and absolutely as you know most matters you and I are extremely like-minded.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Yes, we are.

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KATE CARTER: This is the one thing we differ on.
[Laughing]

REP. CURREY (11TH): Absolutely, so thank you.
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. DELNICKI (14TH): Just a quick comment on the Captive. I know it works fantastic on foundations. We've seen that and I thank you for your work on that along with Curt Vail and a number of other folks. The question comes into play; how will that work out with school children and their education and handling those folks that need that special care? And to Dr. Carter's credit she has done a tremendous job working with staff to bring in house those services which have provided a tremendous amount of savings to the community.

I had the pleasure of working with her and working with you as Mayor and I saw that firsthand, just how an innovative individual can have tremendous savings, can find better ways of delivering the services and I just wonder if we don't run into a situation where it could be jeopardized. That's a concern I have. Because the ability to make sure that every child gets a -- a quality education, that we meet that promise is critical here and that's a concern that I retain.

REP. CURREY (11TH): If I might, Mr. Chair just respond to that quickly. And this Captive would have absolutely nothing to do with the quality of services that any of these districts will be providing for their students. And we will continue to ensure that everyone is providing a high-quality learning experience for every child, every day, regardless of the town you live in.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Next we have Subira Gordon, so we're going right into the public now. And then we'll be going back and forth between public officials, legislators and public.

SUBIRA GORDON: Good afternoon.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Good afternoon. [Laughing]

SUBIRA GORDON: Thank you. Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty, Senator Bertel and the other distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Subira Gordon and I'm the Executive Director of Conn CAN. Today I am here to testify in support of a number Bills, Senate Bill 390, House Bill 5436, House Bill 5378, House Bill 5434, Senate Bill 313 and Senate Bill 391. However, given time I'm going to focus on Senate Bill 390, Senate Bill 313 and Senate Bill 391.

Today this Committee has a number of proposals that elevate the voices of those most impacted by our educational inequity. Conn CAN supports these Bills because they prioritize the potential of Connecticut children, create spaces to discuss equity and excellent and ensure accountability and chronically on the performing education systems. So I'll start by talking about Bill 390, AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. This is really important today because I know I've spoken a number of times about the importance of having a diversified educator workforce, but I do want to just flag something that is not in this Bill and it's around training. Representative McCarty has spoken a number of times about those teachers ad a lot of the leadership of this Committee who are certified but have not been able to get jobs. We

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believe that the gatekeepers of the human resources professionals who are the people in charge of giving jobs to educators of color, need to be trained and implicit biased. We won't use the word mandate but we think we should definitely be incentivizing or requiring these individuals to get that training because it's the reason why a teacher of color who has checked all the boxes and has gotten their certification has not been able to get a job.

Next I want to talk about Senate Bill 313, the Achievement Gap Task Force, which we're reconstituting as the Opportunity Gap Task Force. Senator McCrory was very right. Language does matter so it's really important that we're having -- we're changing the language of this Bill and creating a space where we can elevate issues of education at the legislature and letting educators and people who work in the education space lead in this discussion and bring in different stakeholders to have the conversations to talk about those things inside and outside of the school house that's creating a space to allow Connecticut's opportunity gap to continue to proliferate.

And then finally I want to talk about Senate Bill 391, but first I want to take a moment to thank the people sitting in this circle that worked tirelessly on the agenda reform, education reform agenda of 2012. This law gives education leaders a toolkit to be creative and innovative to implement policies that fit the needs of the students in their school building. However, it's been about eight years since the passage of that initial Bill and there's a lot more work to be done. We believe that independent parent voice should be a part of turn around committees. We believe that Connecticut can

do a lot more to ensure that all of our school districts, those who are under-resourced and need the most help, they have all the information that they need to continue to do some of the great work that's been done in some places like New Haven and East Hartford where those Committees have done really tremendous work and we've seen those schools turn around.

So I want to thank you for your time today and I really am here to take any questions if you have any.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, thank you Subira. I don't have a question for you today. Any questions from the Committee? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and welcome Subira it's always good to hear your testimony. You mentioned implicit bias in the training so I think we need to investigate that some more. Do you want to just comment a little bit more?

SUBIRA GORDON: Yeah, so there's a lot of research out there that talks about training and human resource professionals and their own biases kind of come into play when they're making hiring decisions. And this, we believe at Conn CAN is a part of the reason why teachers of color are not being hired. So specifically the training would have you look at your own biases and why you're making certain decisions over -- over certain hiring decisions. And this training is something that could be done over a video. It doesn't necessarily need to be in person even though we would prefer that. But implicit bias training is a very well recognized,

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and this is something that is done all across the country in healthcare and in certain places in education but we have not looked at it in the hiring on and retention of teachers of color in Connecticut and I think this is something that's really important that we need to focus on.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): If I may just come back, so I don't know in all of the districts throughout this state how the hiring the teachers -- but I know most I think is not the Boards but the administrators. So are you suggesting that this would be training for administrators?

SUBIRA GORDON: So it depends on the district size. So in some districts it's the superintendent or superintendent's office. In some districts there's larger back office staff so they actually have a person who is dealing with human resources and doing a train -- and doing the training so we think -- I don't necessarily know, that's why we didn't spell out, every person who should get the training because I think it depends on the size of the district. So if it's the administrator that's making the hiring decision then yes. If it's a person who is a human resource director, then yes, but if you are considered a gatekeeper of the job, we think you should be getting a training on implicit bias.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions? Well and just to follow that, you're absolutely right, in large districts it might come down to the principal of the school who makes that final decision. And in smaller districts it's probably a human resource person now. So we're going to have to think about

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how we're going to do this 'cause I think it's extremely important and it's really needed. Like I said, I talked earlier I have anecdotal evidence where people have come back to me and they were told, you're not a good fit for this district. So I'm going to just shut up right there. Any other questions? Representative Gibson.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hi, Subira, how are you? My only comment is that I think this training, implicit bias needs not be a video, I think it needs to be an in-person thing. I think it's too great of a topic to be covered through a video, but you did a great job. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Representative Harding followed by Ebony Chisholm, from E4E.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairs McCrory, Chair Sanchez and the ranking members McCarty and Senator Berthel. Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in front of the Education Committee. I'm testifying today on House Bill 5433, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION EXCESS COST COOPERATIVE. I've had a lot of discussions with proponents and those that may have some reservations regarding this Bill and I've gotten to learn a substantial amount about it; I still have more to learn.

But the one thing that I do want to say is I applaud all those that are involved. I spoke with Representative Currey who I know has been working very hard on this particular project. There is a level of uncertainty in regards to special education

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costs, which have to be addressed. Brookfield for example, my hometown all the sudden just in one year had a \$2 million increase in special education costs and when you're talking about a relatively small budget for a small town, \$2 million can have a huge, huge impact on -- on a small budget like Brookfield's. And so -- and I know Brookfield is not the only community in this state that's dealing with those types of issues. So I think there's a lot to be said for -- for this idea, for this concept and I think it could do a lot to predictability, which is a critical, critical aspect of dealing with educational funding on the state level.

And I've also proposed Bills particularly to increase special education funding in regards to excess costs. As all of you know, right now we're only -- we're only reimbursing at a 70 percent rate for excess cost. I believe that we should re-invest in our educational system here in the state and reimburse at a higher rate. I feel that there's -- there's far fewer things in this state that could be more of a priority than funding education, and particularly special education. With that said, I do want to just note that I do have some significant reservations with the Bill as well. I do support the concept, however I have reservations in regards to the funding and how that might impact the towns that I represent.

From my understanding it is going to go to a formula grant program similar somewhat to ECS and if you look at ECS in towns like -- that I represent in Brookfield and Bethel, Danbury would probably do fairly well, but Brookfield and Bethel might see a significant in reduction in the amount of money that

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they're receiving. So anything that reduces the amount of money going to education funding in towns in my district, I have a very hard time supporting and for that reason I do have some significant reservations. With that said, I'd be happy to answer any questions, but I do want to thank everyone that's played a role in helping to create this. I think it is a creative and unique opportunity to address predictability and I want to thank those involved.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Harding, thank you for your commentary. Representative Currey, do you want to address anything?

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. No question for you, I just want to thank you -- and I appreciate you, you did stop me in the hallway and having conversations and I think that's what we need to do a little bit more of and for any of the folks out there who we haven't had a chance to sit down or who have actually refused to sit with us, I think it's just a matter of us getting in front of those people to have those conversations. And I want to thank the members of your repeals -- Board of Ed and Board of Finance who actually submitted testimony in favor of this, especially given what just recently happened in your own community with these increased unexpected costs which had this been placed this potentially would have taken care of that and we wouldn't have that kind of friction.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you, and I look forward to a continued dialogue. There's no reason not to speak in a bipartisan fashion and it doesn't help any of us if we don't do that, so thank you.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Yep, thank you, Representative.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you and welcome Representative Harding to the Education Committee. Could you just, in case I didn't hear it, can you tell me what your reservations -- would you elaborate on those again please?

REP. HARDING (107TH): So my understanding is that as of now the formula that funds special education primarily in the state is -- is excess cost formula which is my understanding is a program in which anything over 4-1/2 times the usual student in the district would cost they would submit, the school district would submit up to the state for reimbursement. Reimbursement rates have technically been about 70 percent of those costs you get reimbursed. It's not a formula really. It's more or less, this is what it costs and this is what you get back.

You know my concerns would be that -- my understanding of the Bill, there is no formula created as of now but there's going to be is my understanding. And if -- if a formula is created like any CS, a formula for excess costs or for special education funding, a town like Brookfield or Bethel which does not get a lot of money at all. In fact in some years in the past we've been reduced to 0 dollars in some budget proposals in regards to ECS funding. That if it turns into an ECS like formula for special education we could run the risk of losing significant amounts of money that we would otherwise be receiving. So that is a component that I have reservations about.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions? Thank you Representative Harding.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you, Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Ebony followed by Representative Klarides-Ditria.

EBONY CHISHOLM: Good afternoon, Chairman McCrory, Chairman Sanchez, and respected members of the Education Committee. My name is Ebony Chisholm and I am the Managing Director of External Affairs with Educators for Excellence Connecticut. We are a teacher-led organization that aims to address student outcomes and ensure that teachers have a voice at policymaking tables. We are pleased to testify in support of Senate Bill 390, AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. We have also submitted testimony in support of House Bill 5436, House Bill 5438, Senate Bill 313 and House Bill 5434. Today we would like to specifically address Section 3 of Senate Bill 390.

Section 3 calls for this Committee to develop a task force that would research the most effective ways to retain educators. We have long discussed the need to improve diversity within the teacher workforce and have made some progress. However, we should also be actively looking for ways to keep dedicated teachers once they get here. Teacher turnover impacts the achievement of all students by disrupting school stability, collaboration and institutional knowledge. The burden of teacher turnover disproportionately impacts our students in high-poverty districts that have a high population of black and brown students. Every student deserves

access to a great educator that will set them up for success.

We've heard it before. Students of color makeup over 40 percent of the student population but despite these rapidly growing numbers, our classrooms do not reflect the students who fill the seats. While more educators of color are being hired, they are also leaving the profession faster than their white peers. An invisible tax is all too often placed on our teachers of color when they are the only or one of the few nonwhite educators in their schools. We must do everything we can to ensure that we are improving and maintaining our teachers population, especially those of -- those of color. A task force that is predominantly comprised of educators and administrators from our highest needs districts will provide insight into what our teachers specifically -- oh, excuse into what our teachers, especially our educators of color, need to keep them in the classroom. Educators for Excellence-Connecticut is happy to provide any information needed and answer any questions that arise to ensure this task force is developed. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Perfect timing. [Laughing]
Are you a teacher yourself?

EBONY CHISHOLM: No.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any questions for the young lady? Thank you.

EBONY CHISHOLM: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Next up Klarides-Ditria followed by Jamilah Prince-Stewart, Faith Act.

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REP. KLARIDES-DITRIA (105TH): Good afternoon. My name is Representative Nicole Klarides-Ditria. Thank you Chairmen Sanchez, McCrory, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel and Members of the Education Committee. To my right is Dr. Sam Scarneo-Miller and Dr. Eleni Diakogeorgiou. Sorry, I do my best. I always mess it up. Thank you very much for hearing us today on I would like to voice my opposition to Raised Bill Number 5439, AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES. We're talking about -- we're talking about Section 16 specifically and I'm going to defer [loud buzzing] -- I'm going to defer my time to the two ladies to my right, thank you.

ELENI DIAKOGEOGRIU: Chairman Sanchez and McCrory, Ranking members McCarty and Berthel and Honorable members of the Education Committee, I would like to use this opportunity to offer this testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Athletic Trainers Association where I serve as the Co-Chair for the Governmental Affairs Committee. This testimony is in favor of House Bill 5439, AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES, particularly to changes specific to Section 16.

Section 16 of this Bill proposed each local and regional board of education and supervisory agent of a nonpublic school in consultation with local emergency medical services providers and allied health professionals develop and implement an emergency action plan for responding to serious and life-threatening sports related injuries that occur during interscholastic and intermural athletic events. A well-designed emergency action plan is considered the first step in a comprehensive plan in

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the care of medical emergencies and athletics. An emergency action plan that is site specific and delineates the rules of all participants responsible for overseeing the care of athletes is essential and essentially will save lives. This Bill would require that all schools have a designated emergency action plan delineating roles and responsibilities, would require the plan to be readily available electronically and at all sites for easy access to all those present. I'm now going to turn this over to Dr. Scarneo-Miller from the Korey Stringer Institute who will share some more statistics for you.

DR. SCARNEO-MILLER: Thank you. Over 90 percent of deaths in athletics can be attributed to four causes: sudden cardiac arrest, exertional heat stroke, traumatic head injuries and sickle cell trait. Emergency action plans can help us to address all four of these causes plus many other causes of sport related deaths. Emergency action plans are concrete written plans that outline what we should do in the event of a catastrophic injury in sport. And while they seem like they're easy enough to be implemented only 66 to 90 percent of secondary schools in the entire United States are reporting that they have an athletics emergency action plan. Emergency action plans are often developed by key stakeholders at the school most often by athletic trainers but most other times by athletic directors, athletic trainers, team physicians, along with emergency medical services in the state.

Some of our recent research has identified that athletic trainers, athletic directors and school nurses have identified state legislation is a

facilitator to develop an emergency action plan. In conclusion the development of a comprehensive emergency action plan is known to be a large contributor to reducing deaths in secondary school interscholastic athletics. Through the development of these plans we can ensure that potentially hazardous situations are thoroughly considered and we are proactively planning to respond to these emergencies. House Bill 5439 Section 16 includes language that considers the evidence based finding and will require all secondary schools with interscholastic athletics to develop a comprehensive emergency action plan. Therefore my colleagues and I at the Korey Stringer Institute housed at the University of Connecticut are pleased to provide testimony in support of these amendments.

REP. KLARIDES-DITRIA (105TH): If you have any questions for us.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Absolutely. Any questions from the Committee? Representative Sanchez.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH); Hello, so presently if there's slower activity going on there's really no emergency plan in place; is that what you're saying?

DR. SCARNEO-MILLER: Hopefully there is but right now we -- there is no -- there is no requirement that there is. So if there an athletic trainer at the school, there's -- you know medical care there after school for those sports. Usually there will be an emergency action plan but we want to make sure that everybody has one because essentially they will help us in saving those lives in case of a catastrophic event.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And basically this is just something -- a simple plan in written form where if they have an activity that's outside of the school, oh that's very simple.

REP. KLARIDES-DITRIA (105TH): This is mine. All three of us are athletic trainers and I work at a secondary high school and this is -- it's about 15 pages, this EAP which took me approximately two to three hours to do. So it's not time intensive at all. It's very easy to do, and between Korey Stringer, the Connecticut Athletic Trainers Association, they'll have templates ready for people just to download and -- and make your emergency action plan.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): So very minimal, minimal cost whatsoever.

REP. KLARIDES-DITRIA (105TH): Yes, printing out paper and that's your only cost.

DR. ELENI DIAKOGEOGIU: Yeah, you should be developing the emergency action plan with the resources you have available to you at your school, whatever field you have; venues, gyms, whatever. And then you just kind of write it out and then whatever you get access to new and better equipment or personnel or personnel change then you just update the plan.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Good, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and welcome and I'd like to recognize Representative Klarides-Ditria for bringing this as an athletic trainer. I was unaware that -- you know a lot of

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our districts did not have a plan in place but I'm -
- I'm happy that you mentioned the timeline because
the Bill suggests that this be ready by July 1, 2020
so do you maintain that this would be ample time to
get the plan and then if you just go over the
placement of it again, thank you.

REP. KLARIDES-DITRIA (105TH): Yes, it would be.
Like I said it took me maybe two or three hours to
do this myself and you can get the template from the
Connecticut Athletic Trainers Association webpage or
Korey Sterner Institute and I believe the CIAC may
even have it on their website as well and it will be
very easy to implement by July 1.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): And then the plan would be
placed throughout all those areas that you mentioned
previously?

REP. KLARIDES-DITRIA (105TH): Yes, you would have
it -- every coach, you'd go over this with every
coach. You make adjustments as I said, different
language, you know your venue changes or coach
changes or your athletic director change, you revise
it as needed. You give it to every coach. You have
it in your gym, you can have it affixed to your
fields where you are. If you have a fitness center,
so everybody -- your principal can have it, your
athletic director have it so everybody knows and you
go over this yearly, annually with your entire staff
so everybody knows their place, their plan and know
where all your emergency equipment is.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Well thank you and thank you
again for bringing this to the attention of the
Committee, thank you.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions from the Committee. And also I want to thank you for your comments and approach to an issue that can probably save someone's life in the future. And I wasn't aware about (inaudible - 01:29:39) to UConn, thanks for informing me of that also.

REP. KLARIDES-DITRIA (105TH): Yeah.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Jamilah followed by Representative Davis and School Superintendent Nicol -- Scot Nicol-Ellington.

JAMILAH PRINCE-STEWART: Good afternoon Chairman McCrory, Chairman Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Jamilah Prince-Stewart, and I am the Executive Director of Faith Acts for Education in Bridgeport. We are people of faith building power to get out children the education they deserve. We build relationships, we build leaders, and we build power through community organizing and civic engagement. Brian Stevenson said that the opposite of poverty isn't wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice. And one of the things that you will notice about what our organization is going to talk a lot about this legislative session to this Committee, other Committees, the Governor, the Administration is justice in the state of Connecticut, what it means and what it will require of all of you elected to serve the people of the state of Connecticut.

So I want to talk about the Bills our organization supports. First we support Senate Bill 390 because our state must recruit and retain more teachers of color. I think today you will hear a lot about how that impacts kids of color and I want to challenge

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you to think about how that impacts white students as well. So there are also studies that show that white students achievement also is impacted by being in front of and having access to teachers of color, and just how that it is important to our state. Unfortunately we're still in a very segregated state and there are kids who grow up in schools and communities that don't really interact with people of color and they only hear and see what is on the news and what stereotypes are presented in front of them. Having access to more minority teachers in the state will not only help kids of color; it will help our state overall.

We support House Bill 5436 -- 5436 because no school should have policies that discriminate against students based on natural hairstyles. I am rocking my natural hair today in a bun [laughing] in support of that. We support House Bill 5378 because social-emotional learning and cultural competency should be part of teacher professional development programs. We support Senate Bill 391 because turnaround panels for Commissioner's Network Schools must have parent voice and that's not a parent who is also an educator, and it must be a parent who has kids at that actual school. We support House Bill 5434 because financial literacy will help break cycles of generational poverty. Lastly, we support House Bill 5433 because we believe strongly that all special education students must receive the services they deserve and that sharing excess clause is the right step for the state of Connecticut.

We believe that these are just policies and we are very grateful for this Committee for taking on such big issues during this short session, so thank you.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Well my comment would be simply if we start caring more about our students grades instead of their braids we probably wouldn't be in this situation. [Laughing]

JAMILAH PRINCE-STEWART: Exactly. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Davis and your Superintendent.

REP. DAVIS (57TH): Thank you very much, Chairman McCrory, Chairman Sanchez, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel. Thank you very much for having me here today to testify in favor of House Bill 5378. I do support the underlying Bill but I also have a request for some additional language. As you may know, from my Bill request earlier this session, the town of Ellington and the Ellington Board of Education has requested the opportunity to create a grant program that would expand our voluntary regional programming that we do in the -- in the town of Ellington to be able to build up those facilities and make this a statewide program for other voluntary regional programs that are very similar to be able to access those funds to continue the -- the startup programs. And I'm going to yield the rest of my time to my Superintendent to give you a little bit more detail of exactly what we're doing in Ellington.

DR. SCOTT NICOL: Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and the Education Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be in front of you today. My name is Scott Nicol, I am the Superintendent of schools for the Ellington Public Schools and I'm here in support of Bill 5378. We propose to include additional

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language in this Bill that would pilot a voluntary competitive and incentive-based state grant funding for creative, high-quality social/emotional health and learning region and/or shared services programming.

The grant funding in the amount of one million dollars, would prioritize initial startup costs for sustainable programming that would reduce the special education financial burden to the State of Connecticut and local education agencies. This pilot would benefit urban, suburban and rural school districts. Currently the Ellington Public Schools runs an off-site 18-21 age post-secondary program coupled with alternative and expulsion social-emotional health learning opportunities. This creative programming meets the diverse needs of Ellington students and students from surrounding school districts. The programming is self-funding primarily due to low cost tuition rates charged to sending districts that financially benefit them as well. So students requiring this specialized program who are educated within Ellington typically save the district \$70 to 100,000 in gross tuition and transportation costs net of excess cost. This saves the state approximately \$30 to \$100,000 in costs toward the excess cost. For students coming from other districts, the savings varies but on average is 20 to 50 percent.

So a medium sized district like Ellington which is about 2700 students, Ellington's program services a relatively small number of students and is currently unable to meet the demand for additional Ellington and other school districts' students. The challenge to scale up this regional programming lies in startup costs and facility availability. Bottom

line here is continued proof of concept is needed for the benefits of voluntary regional and shared services programming. I can entertain any questions that you may have.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So let me start off. I really like the idea, the concept; I heard about it before but I thought I heard it in the context this will be more for special education but now it's sounding like it's not just special education but other programming as well; is that true?

DR. SCOTT NICOL: So it's -- it can be something that special -- special education in terms of 18 to 21 transition, that all students have to do. Alternative education programs, socially-emotionally disturbed, etc. Also it could be coupled with expulsion programming.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay. So just to be clear the special ed component is for those who are transitioning out between the ages of 18 and 21, not those children in the K12 system; is that correct?

DR. SCOTT NICOL: It could be -- so this could be innovative and creative for K-12 students, it can be pre-K through 12.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay. So currently do you have the facility to open up a program like this in Ellington?

DR. SCOTT NICOL: Currently we're -- we have limited space in Ellington so -- 'cause we actually have student enrollment increasing in the area, we're right next to South Windsor, but we're leasing a space that is too small so we have costs that are going towards that.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): And my final question will be, self-sufficient. If you were -- if we were to do this program and if you were to win the grant, how long before this program will be self-sufficient?

DR. SCOTT NICOL: I think it varies on the financial model. So if you're putting in for a request for this grant that's competitive and you're competing with other local school districts, you've got to be able to show a financial model that's going to check off all the boxes that's going to be sustainable. We did -- our current program is -- is in year three. Within six months we were in the black. Now that doesn't mean it would be for everyone, but that -- it's certainly doable.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any questions from my colleagues? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): I just wanted to thank you for being here and for giving us this thought for -- I know we've talked about shared services and what we can do the best cost efficient, but also looking at the quality of the services going forward. Can you tell me, had Ellington -- did you do any research on how many of the other districts in your area might be interested in getting involved in a project like this?

DR. SCOTT NICOL: We have in the queue four or five school districts that have student need right now. So if we get the startup costs in the facility, in six months we can have something up and running and front district from Stafford to Vernon, that general area around Ellington. So we -- we have the students already.

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REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

DR. SCOTT NICOL: Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Up next, Pastor William McCullough followed -- followed by Erika, I don't want to tear your name up, Wiecevsky from Willington.

PASTOR WILLIAM MCCULLOUGH: Good afternoon Chairman McCrory and Chairman Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Pastor William McCullough. I am the Senior Pastor of Russell Temple CME Church in the great city of Bridgeport. I have with me my friend and colleague, Mr. John Diamond who is from the Cathedral of Faith and who is also a co-founder of Faith Acts for Education. I am honored to speak with you all today. I come to you today yes on matters of education policy. But I want to go beyond programs and textbooks and reach into the heart and souls of who we are, who we are as people responsible for decisions that say exactly what we stand for and what we will continue to put up with.

You have Bills before you that we liked and we liked them because we believe that they would close a deficit that threatens our children, not only today but forever. I'm not talking about the budget deficit, I'm talking about the justice deficit across our state and in our schools. It is so very hard to count the many ways justice for our children is in deficit. Bill SB 390 that has to do with hiring and retaining features of color. You know

the numbers. More than half of our school children are black and brown yet their chances of seeing a teacher who looks like them is less than 1 in 10. That is a travesty. Allowing it to go on, allowing our government to stand by without serious actions, those things will not and cannot abide. Teachers of color make a difference in the lives of our students. Studies have shown they learn better and they learn more.

The schoolhouse door may be open to our children as students, but the door to teaching profession remains locked tight. That is not justice. And public policies that don't work to change that will be ill-advised. The Governor and the Education Commissioner have rightly targeted this as an area of need. We commend them on their work, but this match is long, the path is only starting to be cleared. Clear it some more, please. And I look forward to doing all the things that I can do to help. Thank you so much for your time and your consideration.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): And thank you very much. Young man, do you want to add to his testimony? You all right? All right. Any questions from my colleagues? Seeing none, thank you, Pastor. Up next we have I already Erika followed by Ed Leavy. Erika's not here? No Erika? Okay. Senator Anwar and Madeline Willett, student from Ellington Public School. I thought I saw him. He was just right there. Oh, okay, okay. Ed Leavy. He was just sitting here all day. Let me come back.

ED LEAVY: Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and the Committee. I'm here to speak in favor of Bill 390. I am the President

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of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers which represents the 1150 educators Technical Education and Career System. I am also a Broadhaven teacher at Bridgeport for the past 35 years.

We have seen some but very little progress in the growth of teachers of color in our system. For a decade I taught with no teachers of color in a building that about 1 percent white study body. Now it's about half a dozen. But what we ask of those half dozen teachers is something we would never ask of a white teacher and it makes the retention of those teachers so much more difficult. The kids go up to them and say, I don't believe my teachers are understanding what I'm saying. And I was one of those teachers for a long time and I learned that I did not understand some of the conversations about race that my students were having, or about education that my students were having because my experiences were too different.

And we ask those -- the students ask those teachers, can you be my voice? But they're all new teachers, most of them are new teachers and those represent -- conversations with their colleagues are difficult and something I would have no experience how to explain. This is especially true in our trades where very often a new trade teacher is the only person of color in the trade wing. We have no teachers of color in machining although we have 40 teachers. We have two carpentry teachers, we have two electrical teachers, we have two plumbing teachers, we have one mason, we have two carpentry teachers. Our students, you know we brag about the fact that our students can build solid middle-class lives without college debt, but we have to forgive our students if they don't see the trade as a

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welcoming place for them because they don't see their trade teachers who look like them.

So I applaud Bill 390; it's hard to believe that in the year of 2020 we are at the beginning of talking about this and taking action on this, and I hope next year I'm testifying in behalf of the bold steps recommended on that Bill by that task force.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Any questions from our colleagues? Well I will just say a term I always, always say when we talk about education. I'm an educator because I had a teacher that looked like me, that taught me, that made it important for me to learn, and also the fact that you know, you can't be what you don't see. So if we don't turn this ship around right now, we'll be in an even worse situation in the future. So thank you for supporting this very important piece of legislature. Next up, Representative Michel with Superintendent from Derby? Darien.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you members of the Committee. I'm State Representative David Michel of the 146th and I'm here to concede my time to Ms. Tara Ochman and Allen Addley. Thank you.

TARA OCHMAN: My name is Tara Ochman, Board Chair of Darien Public Schools. I'm here today with Superintendent Allen Addley to testify on House Bill 5433. I have significant concerns about the efficacy and public accountability described in 5433. The Bill vests significant decision-making power to a 17 member board of directors with undefined oversight of about \$500 million in public funding serving roughly 4,500 students with disabilities.

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The work of the Coop is exempt from Freedom of Information Act and there appears to be no public oversight or right of appeal for towns or school districts. The board of directors is authorized to make financial allocations to towns based on an as yet, undefined adjustments and with no provision for legislative review or approval. In calculating the community contribution, this Captive insurance company may, but need not, consider the factors of enrollment, the number of students requiring special education services, previous special education expenses and a new undefined equity adjustment based on a town's perceived ability to pay. The creation of a Coop also requires the diversion of funds for administrative costs that otherwise would be and currently go to Connecticut's school children.

The Bill pervorts predictability in special education funding, however, the discretion given to the unnamed board of directors is not limited from year to year, and in a given year and in a given year the community contribution is potentially whatever the board of directors determines. I fear the unintended consequences of this Bill allow for the potential to actually increase special education costs. Should this financial dependency become too much to bear on the Captive insurance company it is logical to assume that the Coop would then need to levy significant assessments on districts. Unanticipated and unpredictable assessments could cause ripple effects both in special education and in general education as resources become finite. The end result is a 0 sum game for children.

I respectfully request that you do not support this Bill in this form or the proposed funding model of this program may not actually violate any IDEA law, it most certainly does not help the image of equality funding for special education services. The vagueness and uncertainty around the financial model, and the transparency of the agency and the capability to continue to ensure sustained funding are all unclear. I am proud to support and represent Connecticut as a local state agent because I believe in a right to education and that education is the foundation of a child's future. Please work with us through these important issues rather than legislating us into the unknown.

And I will say thank you to the parents who fielded some questions that I'm happy to answer if we need more clarity. Dr. Addley.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any questions or comments from the -- oh, I'm sorry. No, go ahead.

SUPERINTENDENT ALLEN ADDLEY: Nice to see you again, Senator. Thank you. I'll be the first to wish you a Happy St. Patrick's Day in the next couple of weeks if I don't see you. [Laughing] In addition to sharing some of the concerns about the transparency detail and accountability associated with the Coop and its work of its Board of Governors, I'm particularly concerned about the unintended educational consequences for some districts. That includes increased special education costs, reduced special education services, and the possible elimination of some regular education programming.

Pulling resources for the Coop will further reduce the local governmental control associated with

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providing excellent student education. It potentially influences and perhaps incentivizing district to lower special education identification which would be an educational disservice to our students and certainly a violation of the special education law. It will also negatively effect the regular education program for students at school districts as they are forced to offset the cost.

Such Cooperative enacted by the state have not been able to maintain the cost or predictability as promised. For example, the state partnership health plan provides health insurance through pulled resources across the state. This plan is -- has inadequate funding to cover the claims resulting in newer implementation of geographic pricing structures for health insurance and increase unpredictability in municipal budgets, especially for those in Fairfield. Some of the largest expenses for districts in the FY21 budget for school districts that participate in this Cooperative health plan, insurance plan. The lack of predictability resultant from the health plans Cooperative management has lead districts to eliminate resources and drastically change educational experience for kids and also the structure of its districts in order simply to live within the financial constraints that they are facing.

In absence of any specific details, I'm suing the December 2019 financial model provided in the Connecticut Special Education Cost Allocation Model, Darien's access cost for FY19 would have resulted in a net increase of \$4 million. Let me assure you, at times ability to pay does not necessarily translate into a Board of Education's ability to pay. As

everyone knows, no matter the wealth of a community resources are not unlimited. A potential net increase of over \$4 million for any community would likely result in the reduction of staff, curriculum and operating resources.

I do applaud the Connecticut School and State Finance Project for its attempts to implement a more predictable and equitable model. This simply is not the model. We should be developing a model that accurately funds education for all students and not one that creates unnecessary conflict between special education and regular education programming. I respectfully request that you do not support the Bill and I ask the state to meet its legal and moral obligation to fund special education with a different approach. I appreciate your time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any questions or commentary from the circle? Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Chair, thank you very much for being here today and thank you for your volunteer service in your community. As a former Board Chair I know a lot of what you go through on a daily basis and it's -- it's -- and we appreciate that. Superintendent, thank you very much for your commentary as well. You both referenced public accountability and concern over lack thereof. Is there -- is there a specific concern around the accountability of what you believe will not be out there for discussion or be able to have a little bit more information on?

TARA OCHMAN: Oh the specific language of the Bill at the moment exempts the Freedom of Information Act and I think certainly in Darien we have lots of experience with the Freedom of Information Act and

we find -- we have a very informed public that wants information and in fact excess cost in special education student services is a very robust conversation every budget for us. And so while I applaud trying to find the right balance to protect -- to protect student privacy I think at the moment the current language is far too broad regarding a total exemption of the Freedom of Information Act.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Okay. And just to clarify. [Crosstalk]. Oh yes, go ahead Superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT ALLEN ADDLEY: I mean for the protectability, I mean there is none. I mean ask the district what it's going to cost next year, no one can tell you. I mean I got it off the 2019 financial model as best I could find, right. And there's no -- currently under the construct there's no predictability for that Board of Governors, your enrollment, your special education enrollment, your special education costs and ability to pay, but other than that there is -- and even that, what is that? How do you define that? So there is no predictability, that's the whole point.

REP. CURREY (11TH): And I think given the fact that we're talking about less than 1 percent of the student population here in the state of Connecticut and these -- this particular population doesn't grow in the way in which we see all our other special education costs increasing; it's actually predictable in and of itself without having -- without even involving a model to be able to write reimbursement. But with the regards to the accountability and the -- and everything that you mentioned, Madam Chair, none of that process leading up to the Captive insurance actually cutting a check

for a reimbursement back to your district, everything that happens prior to that as far as the request for that reimbursement, the review of that reimbursement and the approval of that reimbursement is still all happening over at the State Department of Education of which that is a state agency, and they are under FOI rules. This entity would be a private entity of which we don't currently have -- we don't allow FOI to fall under Cigna or Aetna or things like that. So I just want to clarify that.

You also mentioned the appeals process. That actually is something that's going to be removed from the Bill should this move forward. That language was taken originally from the creation of the Captive insurance company that we used for crumbling foundations in which that Captive is actually making determinations and also doing payment whereas this one would still be making payment determinations, still being over on the State Department of Education side, so that's a drafting error on our part and so that definitely will be cleared up and removed from that.

You also mentioned administrative costs in all of that. With the money sitting over at the Captive, they have the ability to actually receive investment income and so those costs for administrative fees could be offset through that. I know there has been some information put out there saying that those administrative costs could be anywhere from \$2 to \$5 million. Actually in the meetings that we had with folks and the folks also who actually used those numbers, we've indicated to them that costs are not -- typically not going to exceed \$500,000 and so we're actually going to clear the language up there to make sure that that's tightened up as well.

But I think all of the concerns that you raise are absolutely valid concerns and I think that if we're willing to have a conversation, more than happy to come out and do that with you.

TARA OCHMAN: So respectfully I feel that while I understand statewide when we look at this population group it represents 1 percent, but for towns and towns like Darien and all of my Board Chairs I talk to are committed to learner, students in the access cost meeting that threshold represent -- or let's put it this way, in order to access their learning, there are significant dollars attached. So while for the state that population may grow 1 percent, one or two children entering into a town or all the sudden having needs is a significant financial change. And I would say we do see volatility in that. I don't know that the Coop is going to be able to predict that, nor I have seen evidence of such. The current model that was rolled out as an example and this is what I think our parents were referencing, showed significant short falls in dollars to Darien. We are committed to educating our learners and educating them their best means and that would mean a significant burden locally on top of any assessment that is an ability to pay.

So I think there's a -- this conversation is important and robust. I think the school finance project did send their consultants down, and I know there are communities that support this Bill. What I found in the rooms that I was in was that there was not support for this Bill. What I would urge the legislature to do is to put Boards of Education together. We are state agents, you have the authority to ask us to do that, and let the communities hear the differences. Because when I'm

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sitting in rooms that universal are objecting the idea and there are other rooms that are embracing, those boards could probably learn from each other and best practices rather than legislating and/or understanding the needs.

REP. CURREY (11TH): And I completely agree with you and the fact that yes, you have that 1 or 2 students who move in and that definitely is volatile and throws off your budget on both sides because then you're going back to your municipal side saying, hey I need more money and we just didn't budget for this. And that's exactly what this is going to protect you from and so you have a product so that regardless of how many students are going to move in, you're going to receive that reimbursement from the Captive.

SUPERINTENDENT ADDLEY: I won't argue with you, Representative Currey but I implore you, please don't drive a wedge between special education and regular education funds. That's not -- that is not going to be a good thing for the state of Connecticut and I would urge you to look -- look at some of these models of health plan in Connecticut prime that was for stop loss and see how well is that doing under management. I don't think you'll find that it's doing too well at this particular point, but I implore you to give a closer look at this, please.

REP. CURREY (11TH): I would just say I don't think anybody's intent is to play sides, one versus the other. I would say that the state of Connecticut already sets aside \$140 million for excess costs so there is actually line item that already separates that out, so -- but happy to have that conversation

and happy to come down and talk with any of the folks that you all are talking to around your tables. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Excuse me, I hope Representative Currey will permit me to say this, but I'm wondering does it concern you at all that the Board of Directors are unelected? Can you just comment on that for a moment?

TARA OCHMAN: Yes, and we have significant concerns around having no electoral responsibility among this Board of Directors. I can elaborate, but yes.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. Thank you. I'm just trying to -- as we hear all the different testimony on this Bill, what are the major concerns and that -- that's one that wasn't mentioned too much but I think that's --

TARA OCHMAN: I think the fact that we can come here and we can express our concerns to our elected officials and you hear us and you take action is really the model that Connecticut is set up on. This creates a whole separate body and I know that the drafting appeals -- it sounds like in the drafting there may be more information on appeals but we know we can come to you, we know you listen to us, and I don't see that language.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, thank you for your testimony. Oh, I'm sorry Representative Blumenthal.

REP. BLUMENTHAL (147TH): Thank you for coming all the way up here and giving your testimony, we always appreciate it and I'd be glad to assist with additional conversations with Representative Currey and others who are working on the Bill.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Jessica Weaver followed by Treasurer Shawn Wooden.

JESSICA WEAVER: Good afternoon. Good afternoon Chairmen Sanchez, Chairmen McCrory, and other distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Jessica Weaver. I'm wearing as many hats as there are Bills here today to testify on. I am here as a Master of Public Policy Student at UConn, the Legislative Fellow for the YWCA Hartford Region, and member of the Jumpstart Connecticut Board, and as the youngest member of the Newington Board of Education. In my role as a I student, I have been extremely passionate about the issue of financial literacy which is why I'm here to testify on SB 392 and HB 5434. My financial literacy advocacy started way back in May 2017 when I had the pleasure of interning for our former Treasurer, Denise Nappier until spring of 2018 where I was under the Director of Financial Literacy.

Financial literacy to me is near and dear to my heart. When I was at UConn I was able to garner 1000 signatures and petition for a course to be offered there. But frankly offering a course at the college level isn't really enough. These are where students make the biggest mistakes regarding student debt, falling into the pitfalls of using Venmo and Cash App and other things making those hard decisions about what to put their money towards when they're already racking up tons of student loans.

Some of the statistics show 40 percent of teens report that stress about money affects their school performance, but only 31 percent know what a credit score is. Financial Literacy has not been a priority as much in Connecticut as in 2017 Connecticut received an F on their report card of the Champagne College Center for Financial Literacy. We were 1 of 11 states to receive that report because do not have a requirement. And I will say now after advocating for requirement for financial literacy over the past few years, I will say now that I'm a Board Member I would say that if it's mandated we really need to put funding behind it, which Senator McCrory has pointed out.

In my YWCA capacity I'm here to think on our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women and that is why I support HB 5436, which is where we talk about the discrimination based on natural hair. And if any of you were here on Friday, or last Thursday we rolled out the CROWN Act with Representative Porter and Senator Kushner and truly this is something that translates not only the workplace but into our own schools. So as we are in that mission of eliminating racism and empowering women and it disproportionately impacts women and women of color, we look to support this Bill as well. I can answer any questions.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. As you know -- I knew I knew you from somewhere.

JESSICA WEAVER: Yeah, I was here last year.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Financial literacy is probably my biggest, one of my biggest concerns on this legislative session and like you said, waiting

until college is way too late, way too late. And research shows those who have financial literacy at an early age have better credit scores, able to receive loans and unfortunately in Connecticut we have districts that have the resources to do it and districts that don't. So we've got to find a way that all our children have the ability to learn financial literacy at an early, early age so that's the reason why we're doing it. So with that commentary, I'll pass the questioning to colleagues around the circle. Seeing none -- oh yes, Representative Maclachlan.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony. I just wanted to thank you for coming up here. Financial literacy is so important as a millennial as well. Some of the models of -- the traditional models of entering adulthood and be able to do things like afford a mortgage are and those opportunities it's a different landscape for our generation. The millennials current have 5 percent of the US residential market. The baby boomer generation when they were our age had a 30 percent of the residential market. And so we have to be a lot smarter and unfortunately I didn't have the opportunity to take any financial literacy classes in school and ended up having to read Robert Kiyosaki book at age 23-24 to figure out some -- some -- how to invest, how to manage -- how to manage finances, so thank you for being here and looking forward to working with the efforts of this Committee to proliferate financial literacy. So thank you.

JESSICA WEAVER: Thanks. I would add too, financial illiteracy disproportionately impacts millennials,

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women, people of color and people of lower socioeconomic status so it's really something that is at the cross sections of a lot of things and I think millennials are particularly disproportionately impacted by it because a lot of us were children when our parents lost their jobs in the 2008-2009 financial crisis. Money wasn't exactly what you talked about during that time. I know in my household, when your dad's getting unemployment checks you don't exactly want to talk about money so it disproportionately impacts this generation more than anywhere else.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Treasurer Wooden followed by Chantel Mendez from Faith Acts.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Thank you. Thank you Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Ranking Member McCarty and members of the Education Committee. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 5434, AN ACT CONCERNING THE TREASURER'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INCLUSION OF FINANCIAL LITERACY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM. I would also like to publicly congratulate and note Senator McCrory's leadership in the State Senate on this issue of financial literacy and I look forward to our work together.

As I've outlined in my written testimony the lack of financial literacy in our state and across our country has damaging effects that last a lifetime. We all recognize the challenges that young people face as they struggle to pay bills and to manage

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their money. When they lack an understanding of personal finances they're prone to expensive behaviors like payday loans, high interest credit cards and exurbanite student debt.

I remember my own first days of college and an experience that you or maybe your children may have seen. While walking into my student union there were companies lining the walkways with tables to sign up teenagers for credit cards with bad financial terms, and in exchange for high interest rates and annual fees. A trendy T-shirt may have been added or maybe a poster. Ill-informed financial decisions have consequences that last a lifetime. They contribute to defaulting on loans and bad credit scores. They make it hard for young people and families to move up the economic ladder. The Bill before you is an earnest attempt to improve our state's financial literacy through greater instruction in our schools. House Bill 5434 increases instruction through a model curriculum. And yes, the Bill requires a high school course in personal finance.

I want to assure you that I did not come by this proposal lightly. I watched as we as a state, we tried to approach this issue from other angles. We've encouraged electives, worked with private partners, tried pilots and woven the subject matter into other initiatives designed to help our students. Over the past 15 years we've engaged no less than six state agencies hoping to move the needle. For me the teaching of financial literacy in our schools is a matter of preparedness. Are we graduating students who can apply what they've learned in school to the challenges they will face in life? When it comes to financial literacy all of

the research suggests that the answer to that question is a resounding no in the state of Connecticut.

Last year I kicked off an economic empowerment listening tour. In my first stop was a professional development workshop in Meriden, Connecticut on financial literacy. I heard directly from teachers who spoke to the positive impact that their classes have on students and their families. I heard from parents who expressed thanks for having such a class, something they wished they'd had while they were in school. The time has come for our state to join the 21 other states that require classes in personal financial management by approving this Bill. In developing the proposal before you, my office has engaged teachers and administrators, boards of education and other stakeholders. HB 5434 reflects thoughtful consideration of their concerns and feedback attempting to set realistic timelines and provide districts with much-needed flexibility on how they will meet this requirement.

I've also personally met with our Commissioner of Education on this subject. He and I share sincere interests in promoting financial literacy and education, especially in underserved communities. We have committed to continue working together to achieve the important goal of increasing the financial literacy of Connecticut students. Additionally, I look forward to working with all of you to better prepare our students with the basic skills to make the critical personal financial decisions that will define their future economic journeys in life.

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I would like to end by acknowledging one thing that I frequently hear from school districts. Meeting state and federal requirements for education is a lot easier when there are resources behind them. I attempted to address this issue through a pilot program in Section 6 of the Bill. But through the course of discussions and reviewing the Senate Bill I recognize that there are limited financial resources and I'm also aware that the Senate Bill 392 more directly addresses this issue. Accordingly, I ask that you remove the pilot program in Section 6 of House Bill 5434 so that this Bill may advance out of this Committee and the issue of resources can be addressed by the appropriate Committees. With that said, I also encourage you to consider providing the Department of Education with the additional staff for curriculum development as proposed in the Governor's midterm budget adjustments.

I thank you again for this opportunity to testify and ask that the Committee JFS House Bill 5434 with my recommended changes. Thank you and I'd be happy to take any questions.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, Mr. Treasurer. Any questions from my colleagues? Yes, Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman very much. Good afternoon, Mr. Treasurer and thank you very much for the articulate and really well thought out testimony and work you've done on this. We -- in my experience we don't generally get proposals for adding curriculum to what we have already that are that well thought out, so I really want to tell you how much I appreciate that. And before I --

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before I ask my question, I -- I want to tell you, I do support it; I think it's a great idea. I have -- I always an interrogation though when these things happen and I just want to ask you about your perspective on it. I -- I was -- I'm in my 10th year here and when I first came I was always on Education; the very first discussion and vote that we took was on the curriculum in -- in high school that had been voted in as a result of having to apply for race to the top. And a lot of changes, you know adding, increasing the number of hours and so on have been made in 2010, we then didn't get the money and had to do it anyway, so the vote was to put that off. And then we put it off and we put it off and we put it off, and finally a couple of years ago we felt we had to vote on something and we voted on sort of a broad curriculum framework and one of the things that we kind of insisted on as a group is, you know we've got to be careful about adding stuff to this because it took all this work to get us to the point where we are so what do we do now?

How do we cope when we get new requests that come in, even if there's some funding and if I understood properly in your proposal, it's not necessarily funding but you've worked it all and you would make the materials available, which is -- which is very appealing. But I just wondered on what -- what your perspective might be in terms of fitting this into something that's already packed so tightly and is still in some urban districts very difficult to obtain.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Sure, no that's -- that's an excellent question and something that we've confronted from the beginning and one of the things that this Bill reflects is the ability to

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incorporate this high school, one credit graduation requirement that we're proposing into the existing stem requirements, right. So that's one of the flexibility measures that we built in that would not in fact require a net increase overall in terms of hours of coursework or credits. With that -- with that said, I believe so strongly in this financial literacy, you know when we think about things that -- that kids should have exposure to and that is universal, right, it's one of the things that we absolutely know no matter what, you step out of high school and you go into the workforce, you start a family, you go to college, whatever your next step is, if you are ill-prepared financially in terms of the basics of personal financial management you -- you are simply ill-prepared for the world.

So the subject itself is -- is so unique and universal in that regard that yeah, I would be arguing even if we didn't build in this flexibility for it to be incorporated into the existing state requirements, that it's still worth pursuing.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Well would there be any, just as -- as you see the flexibility set and there's a set of possible courses that can be taken in the -- in the stem area; is there anything that would have to fall out if somebody could take, I don't know, I don't remember how many there are, if somebody takes five or six courses in that area, does something inevitably fall out of the equation if they were to take financial literacy?

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: The -- well, because it's structured as electives in terms of -- a certain number of stem courses, I believe it's nine -- nine

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credits and existing state law, within that -- within that current nine there are a set of courses.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Yes.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: So when you say would something have to fall out, the answer is no in terms of the requirement. You would still, this would just be another way to meet that total nine credit requirement.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Okay, thank you. I don't have it all in front of me so I can't remember everything that we did, but -- but thank you, that's -- that's very helpful and thank you again for your work.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Thank you.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Gibson.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Treasurer.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Good afternoon.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Could you maybe speak to your views on the long-term economic benefit of this Bill on a better educated group of students or students who are coming up, even if there is a financial tag to this; how could the long-term economic benefit, how could we see those returns in greater numbers that would justify any value or dollar amount attached to this Bill?

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Yeah, I think the high amount of student debt, the high amount of credit debit, the perpetual cycle of young people, young families and even older ones struggling to get out

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of a debt burden and bad financial decisions, that's a drive on our economy. That's a drive on communities. I mean you know the providers of high interest credit cards you know certainly they make a killing but that does nothing to help our local -- our local economy, right. So -- so I do believe right, a financial investment in this will pay off and have dividends at the -- at the local level for each of our communities.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Thank you, Mr. Treasurer.
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and welcome Treasurer. I think everyone agrees that financial literacy is very important. I think our problem is that we keep putting more and more graduation requirements on our high school students and as you pointed out there could be some flexibility within certain areas of the curriculum. Do -- is it your position that we could not do this through a program and the consumer education part of the curriculum, and if it were to begin even earlier, in the earlier grades and follow through; do you -- would that satisfy your interest or do you think it has to be an actual credit requirement.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: No, it -- so we do believe it should be a credit requirement to graduate from high school, but beyond that we also believe it should be incorporated financial literacy into the earlier curriculum. And you mentioned consumer education. What this Bill does is actually modify the definition to incorporate financial literacy in what already exists for consumer education. You know what we're trying to do is to build in as much

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flexibility as possible within the existing framework to incorporate financial literacy and to culminate with that requirement from high school. And so the answer to your question is yes, it could be a part of that as currently proposed.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Just a comment, Mr. Treasurer. You look much different from the ads on the TV [laughing]. I think you look slimmer. Well it's the kids, the kids make the ad. [Laughing] Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Treasurer, I thank you for your testimony and if there's an issue of money, you're the Treasurer, you've got the money don't you? [Laughing]

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: I have conveyed to the Commission of Education that we can work very closely from a staff perspective on the development of curriculum.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): But if it costs me some money, can I come see you?

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: You can come see me anytime. [Laughing]

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, thank you for your testimony.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Chantel Mendez and I believe she has some friends that are coming with her. Now all of you aren't talking, you realize that, right? [Laughing] When you come up, I know who Chantel --

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and everyone else, can you just mention your name, please?

CHANTEL MENDEZ: Hi, my name is Chantel Mendez.

STEPHANIE NIEVES: My name is Stephanie Nieves.

CHASTITY BAUZA: My name is Chastity Bauza.

FRANCIS NUNEZ: And I'm Francis Nunez.

CHANTEL MENDEZ: Good afternoon Chairman McCrory and Chairman Sanchez, Ranking Members -- Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Chantel Mendez. I am born and raised in Bridgeport. I am a proud parent of my daughter, Corine Mendez Barner [phonetic] who is an 8th grader at Multicultural Magnet School. A lot of my family is from the Bronx, New York and they moved here to Connecticut when my mother was in 6th grade and one of the reasons why my mother hated to move to Connecticut was the Bridgeport public school system that she had to enter when she came here. When she had my brother and I my mother worked very hard and long hours so that my brother and I could attend private and Catholic schools. She made a lot of sacrifices for us but she worked very hard. And now that I'm a mother and I have a daughter, one of my concerns was the Bridgeport Public School system and putting my daughter in school.

I didn't want her going to a Bridgeport Public School but the reality is I had to do something. So my daughter is in Multicultural Magnet School but she's in there through the lottery system and she was picked 14 out of 25 seats that were available. Although she is in one of the best magnet schools in Bridgeport the only encounter with a minority

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teacher that she had was a substitute teacher and I don't think that is fair though she has this -- the substitute teacher, the connection that they had was one of a kind and this is why I support the Senate Bill 390, AN ACT OF CONCERN -- THE ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

Now the issue that I have is that my daughter is going into high school. And I'm going to get through this without crying -- [crying].

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Take your time.

CHASTITY MENDEZ: The reality is that there are no good schools in Bridgeport and I hate the fact that it is bothering me to figure out where she's going to go to school. [Crying]. It's not a reality that I should have to face. It's not a reality that any parent in Bridgeport should have to face. My daughter is on the waiting list for the school of her choice, which is Bridgeport Military Academy and she's 200 something on the list out of 800 kids and this is not a thing that anybody should have to go through. Oh gosh, I'm sorry. But at the same time, like I said this is a reality that too many parents in Bridgeport are going through. And we don't have all the resources we need in our school systems and this is a direct result of the opportunity gap in Connecticut. We don't have updated facilities, access to extracurricular activities and direct pipelines to colleges. And this makes me wonder, how do our state level officials look at Bridgeport? Do you think little of us? Do you think little of our children? Do you think we don't deserve other things -- the resources that other communities in the other cities and towns get? So because of this, I support the Senate Bill 313, AN ACT RECONSTITUTING

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THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP TASK FORCE. I feel like something has to be done about this, and it needs to be done soon. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your team. Go ahead.

STEPHANIE NIEVES: Thank you. So my name is Stephanie Nieves and I am a mother advocate and a proud member of Faith Acts. I am here to support Bill 5433, which helps funding for special education. Funding is a major problem in Bridgeport and it affects my family in the following. I have reached out to doctors, friends, 211 and Birth to Three and through this process it has become very apparent that there are very few resources for children with special needs or learning disabilities. And we are being told that these reasons is limited resources, lack of funding being the main reason.

Due to just cliffs, our teachers, our social workers are asked to take on double the workload resulting in false achievements and lower expectations of our children. False achievements, I am a personal example of that. My son -- the schools have advised me that he is missing or achieving educational goals that he is not reaching in order to lighten their load and disqualify him from services. I noticed that behavioral and special education are all balled into one and placed into classrooms together when I know my son can't properly learn if there's another child having an emotional breakdown, nothing of which doing with disability or educational backgrounding.

So all that I ask is that we do a little bit better and get some more education for our special needs inside the Bridgeport Public School systems.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. And I'll just say, listen, I appreciate your coming up and testifying, advocating for yourself and for community. We need more like this. We need to hear reality. Many people in this building need to understand the reality in which you are -- you're living, and choice is very important. I'm going to do everything I possibly can. I get it. I'm a teacher. I live in an Urban community just like Bridgeport. I understand. We're going to go -- we're going -- we're going to continue to fight. We're going to continue to fight and we're going to move the needle and we're going to create more teachers of color and we're going to try to get as many resources as possible for you. So I just ask you not to give up. Don't quit. Don't quit on yourself, don't quit on your children, don't quit on your community and next time you come, bring more people. All right. Any other questions or comments? Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I also want to thank you for coming up. I actually went through grammar school and high school in Bridgeport, both Catholic schools, Blessed Sacrament and Notre Dame. You know 10 years ago when I came up here I came in the same time Governor Malloy came in and there was an Education Reform Act that we -- we really worked, well a lot of people worked long and hard on. I was a newbie, I was just kind of following the show. But I remember the night we passed it. Actually I was sitting behind Representative McCrory then before he was a Senator, we were so excited because

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it really, really was going to make a difference to communities like Bridgeport and here we are 10 years later and to hear your story today; my heart goes out to you about your children. Your right, Constitutional right to have your children have a good education, you deserve it and certainly your children do. So 10 years later it's just very, very discouraging to hear this today about -- about a community that really everybody wants to be successful.

Bridgeport was a beautiful, beautiful -- it's a park city. A beautiful city. We need to get it back to that. I don't know why, when you look at funding for education it feels like Bridgeport does get a little less than our other major cities and I don't know why that is, or if it's still that way but thank you for coming up today. Boy, it makes us really realize we have not gotten the job done for sure. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Representative Kokoruda and I came in the same year and I remember that Bill got brought out at about 12:15 in the middle of the night [laughing] and I remember talking on it for a very long time. The -- the question I'd like to ask you is, all of you, is what do you think -- I mean I know that there's money involved and you know sometimes money helps and sometimes it's not all you need. What do you think has gone most wrong? What would you like to see turn around and happen? Any thoughts that you could share with us so we could do something about it.

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CHANTEL MENDEZ: I think we need people on our side. You know our state officials really backing us up and seeing that there is a need in Bridgeport. We don't have the quality education that other towns have and so -- and we definitely need the funding and we need the state officials to be on our side as well.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): If -- and I'm not trying to put you on the spot, but you could snap your fingers and say, I want the moon, what would be the first thing you'd get be? What is it that obsesses you the most that -- that you don't have in the schools?

CHANTEL MENDEZ: We don't funding, we don't have funding at all.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Okay, what would you use it for?

CHANTEL MENDEZ: Extracurricular activities, better resources, updated books. They have a lot of outdated books, so those are some major things. The extracurricular activities open up the doors for so many other things as well and like we said also the minority teachers. Those are very important things to have successful and bright students in Bridgeport.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Well thank you. You know, everyone does deserve to get that opportunity that education gives you and then after that it's yours to do what you want with it, but if you don't get the education you have very little chance. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? I'll just say before you guys leave, you know, you guys make me so proud. And the reason why

you might not know, you destroyed a myth that they don't care about education. You know I hear that -- I hear that often and I handle them when they say it to me but you are the reason why we're here to try to get things done, and I know you care. And I know you care not just about your children but all children in the state. So thank you for coming up and like I said, next time bring more people.
Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Good afternoon everyone. Honorable Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and Honorable Members of the Education Committee, I'm here to support SB 391 and I am going to yield my remaining time to Madeline Willett who is an Ellington High School student who is going to share with you the wonders she's doing.

MADELINE WILLETT: Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and members of the Education Committee. My name is Madeleine Willett and I am a sophomore at Ellington High School in Ellington. I am a Girls Who Code member and I am asking you to support Senate Bill 280, specifically Section 3.

I was never truly given the opportunity to investigate my interests in computer science until I entered high school. My freshman year I took a class called AP Computer Science Principles; it introduced me to a whole new world. However, at first, I was unsure if I belonged. I was one of only three girls in that class, and all of the guys previously developed skills in coding and had education in computer science. I realized as the year went on it was because they had been encouraged to explore these interests as a hobby before they

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had reached high school, whereas I had been encouraged by organizations in my community to pursue my interests through nursery care, crafting, and volunteering at local senior centers and libraries.

While I love my community and I do not disparage these pathways, I am left wondering why I was pointed in this direction rather than a robotics team, or a coding curriculum? This year I am taking AP Computer Science A, but now I am one of two girls. Clearly things are not changing, only getting worse. I encounter on a regular basis a misperception amongst my female peers that they are not smart enough to code, and I continually feel at a disadvantage because of my late start. In this society, girls are rarely paid attention to because of their knowledge, only their looks. We must create more communities that encourage girls to use their knowledge and curiosity, break stereotypes, and show girls that in every single way they are capable of absolutely anything they want to do.

Seeing this, I decided to take action. In this past year, I have started two computer science clubs at my high school. One of them being Girls Who Code, it was formed to empower young women and give them an opportunity to pursue their interests and emphasize that everyone can code. Girls Who Code has offered a sisterhood and the opportunity to show the world that young women have a place in technology, now and in the future we need to make sure girls are in Computer Science courses. By keeping track of who is in these classrooms, we can identify key factors for improvements, and add necessary pressure to identify what can be done, and learn how to provide

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computer science education opportunities for everyone. I urge you to support Senate Bill 280.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just really have to compliment for starting the two programs after school and for taking on this initiative. I think it's very important as we move forward that we don't forget -- forget about the girls that are interested in computer science, and you're going to be helping us pave that pathway, so thank you very much for being here and bringing that to our attention.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Barry.

REP. BARRY (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank you for coming up here. As a former robotics coach and coaching girls and boys, I will say the girls were definitely -- had an advantage and they did better than the boys. So I want to thank you for being up here and for your advocacy, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you so much for being here today and telling us your story. And I just wondered, did you get any encouragement at all when you were in the lower grades before you started where you are now?

MADELINE WILLETT: No, I did not.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Okay. Very interesting. And it's wonderful your work starting the groups that you started to do computer work is -- it's a great

way to get other people interested so thanks for being here.

MADELINE WILLETT: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions? Thank you for your advocacy, appreciate it very much. All right. We're going to go with Glenn from CAS, Glenn Lungarini, Lungarini and then followed by -- we're going to call up like four Superintendents. I know you guys have to be on a call real soon so I'm going to bring you up together. So I want you guys to sit back and huddle up and figure out how you all are going to use this four minutes you're going to get, all right. So why don't you go out there, get in a huddle and come back and figure out how you all are going to put this together, 'cause it's on the sane Bill. Thank you.

GLENN LUNGARINI: Thank you, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty and Senator Berthel as well as other members of the Education Committee. My name is Glenn Lungarini. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Schools and the CIAC. We represent approximately 1,000 member school principals and assistant principals as well as act as the governing body for interscholastic athletics in the state of Connecticut. I submitted testimony on a number of Bills but during my time today would like to just talk about two specifically, the first being SB 390.

We greatly appreciate the work that has been done on this and recognize the need for minority teacher recruitment as well as administrative recruitment. At CAS/CIAC we have taken a hard look at this from private nonprofit organization and have adjusted the manner in which we actively recruit and look for

people that we -- that can work within our organization and have seen an impact from that. So we recognize the need for change and the great impact that that can have and are hopeful that we can continue to support that and be a part of any solution that you're looking for in that area.

The other Bill that -- Act that I'd like to speak on is HB 5439, an Act concerning the various revisions and additions to the education statutes, specifically Section 16 of the Act, which talks about emergency action plans within school athletic programs. This is an area that additionally we also feel is extremely important. At CAS/CIAC we have taken proactive measures regarding this already. We have worked with the CSMS, the Connecticut Society Medical Society Sports Medicine Committee as well as the Connecticut Association of Athletic Trainers to develop model templates for emergency action plans. We have submitted those model templates out to schools already.

In addition, this is language that if it were not to pass legislatively as a Bill that CAS/CIAC is presenting language through our membership that even within our own membership we are seeking to require this of our member schools beginning with next school year. So this is something that we do believe can meet the timeframes that are in the Bill. We do believe that it is necessary and this is something that we would consider acting on with legislation or not.

My last point on that end part of the Bill that takes about (inaudible) and as part of support of that we have recently purchased 64 cold water

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emergent tubs for schools that do not have those that needed it. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, Glenn and thank you for your testimony. Any questions from the circle? Seeing none, thank you again. Okay. Next up we've got five superintendents, Fran Rabinowitz, Kathleen Grieder, Matt Conway, Patricia (inaudible) and Jan Perruccio. Just introduce yourself individually before you begin. Following, after these young people, we're going to go with Faith Sweeney next.

FRAN RABINOWITZ: Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel and Representative McCarty and all members of the Education Committee. I'm Fran Rabinowitz. I represent The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents and these are three of my members and superintendents and I am going to give my time to them today.

KATHLEEN GRIEDER: I'll start off. My name is Kathleen Grieder and I am the Superintendent for the Farmington Public Schools. I'm also the President of CAPSS for this school. I am concerned with the proposed excess cost Cooperative and I believe it will have a direct lacking and adverse impact on the quality of educational programming and services students receive across Connecticut. By creating an entity that makes decisions about local and state dollars and isolation of oversight by elected officials and outside of the annual legislative process, I believe it will likely have an impact across all towns both in special education and general education.

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I have three broad areas that I'm concerned with and I can't go through all of them. You will have my testimony to look through, but certainly funding sustainability and the impact on local tax dollars - - taxpayers and municipalities is one of those areas due to the administrative costs that will now be associated with this and also that equity adjustment that hasn't fully been defined in that -- in the design of this Cooperative. Given CAPSS' analysis we believe that there will be volatility in two-thirds of Connecticut school districts. A municipality is given the design and this is not taken to the -- we already have such volatility with costs that don't meet the threshold of excess costs. Taken together volatility and a lack of predictability will remain and may actually escalate year to year impacting funding sustainability.

There are several other areas that are quite concerning including the impact on students and equality of special education program. One example is that the Cooperative has the potential to discourage school districts from bringing back during the course of a school year when students are really ready to do so given the annual fixed community contribution, those students that come back don't -- no longer meet the threshold for excess costs and once the community contribution is received by the Cooperative any class savings will not be returned to the school district in that fiscal year. Instead we will have to wait for the next year for that adjustment to occur and we will not realize the savings in the current year.

It also discourages least restricted environment. We create many high quality specialized programs in district. That is the most -- the best place to

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educate our students. We have the most resources there and a lack of local involvement in the Cooperative creates distance from the local school district to the funding source. And this may actually disincentivize districts from focusing on high quality programming in district. There's also a lack of specificity, transparency, predictability and accountability in this proposal. I won't go through all the specifics because you'll have my testimony but I will hand this over to my colleagues.

MATT CONWAY: Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Turn on the microphone please.

MATT CONWAY: -- and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Matt Conway, and I am here today as the Superintendent of Derby Public Schools and Co-Chair of the CAPSS with Jan, the Legislative Committee for CAPSS. I'm here to address some points in opposition to 5433 but I do want to begin by publicly recognizing the work that Representative Currey specifically has put into this Bill, the time and effort that has gone into it. While we feel it falls short in places that I'll go through, I don't want to -- I do want to recognize the work and time and effort that has gone into it and the thinking behind it.

The Bill itself lacks predictability, accountability, transparency which is extremely important, but also the specificity by which anyone can make any kind of analysis as to its merits. And this is coming from someone who represents a town,

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Derby, who by one model we used may stand to benefit financially from the Bill, only to be told by the proponents of the Bill, the model our consultant used to make that determination was an old model. This was further made very evident when CAPSS asked two outside consultants to independently analyze the bill and both provided similar responses below even after further reviewing responses, which I've included in my testimony, even after further reviewing responses by the authors to our consultant's interpretations of the Bill, there were several questions left unanswered. The statute reserves up to 1 percent of the payments made, approximately \$2 million for administrative costs. \$500,000 is an estimate, and the amount of administrative costs that will be incurred is one of the many questions left unanswered by the legislation. It is true that the Cooperative will pay 100 percent of excess costs in a given year, municipalities will be required to pay for this service under an unknown model that will replace the excess cost reimbursement model we now have in a way that will impose greater costs on many municipalities.

The legislation leaves entirely to the board of directors the determination of the required payments, which will include the equity adjustment. We simply have no idea what the actual charges will be for any town. For a town like Derby, depending on the amount of our contribution anything over 500,000, we would have to go to referendum to borrow funding, to cover upfront costs, I would have to go to referendum because I would have to figure ours would be at least that dollar amount, to referendum.

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We've got a 0 percent increase for two years, the past two years to go back and ask our community to hold a referendum on over half a million dollars is unrealistic.

The legislation leaves fundamental questions to be resolved by a non-accountable board of directors, including overall costs and the determination of winners and losers under an unspecified equity formula. So I would ask that before any votes are taken I believe we owe every municipal leader answers as to what will the equity adjustment be based on and how will it work and what will the timing of the required contributions be. And in closing if the state agreed to just fully fund excess cost why would we need to form a captive and incur additional administrative costs that could otherwise be used to provide direct support to the kids who need it. Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): You've got two minutes to add value.

JAN PERRUCCIO: No pressure. I'm Jan Perruccio. I'm Superintendent of schools in Old Saybrook. Thank you very much for having us up here today and thank you for accommodating our schedule this afternoon. I, like my colleagues, I want to say that I know a lot of work went into the creation of this language. I know a lot of work went into the creation of the formula. I was the CAPSS representative to the special education cost model task force that convened over the last couple of years, year and a half. But we have put a lot of time and effort as a professional organization, as individuals into trying to understand how this will benefit all districts, and we do not see how this

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will benefit all districts. I won't repeat the points made by my colleagues, but I will say that I'm very concerned about any new money that needs to be found to create -- to pay for administrative fees for an insurance group to administer funds. I'm concerned about how the fees will be paid because they're not exactly explained, and I would think that an insurance captive would want to have a lot of money to invest for a longer period of time so I'm thinking that implies some sort of upfront payment.

The formula to obtain equity doesn't exist and won't exist until after the Bill is created. It's very hard for me to rally behind something that I can't possibly know how it's going to have an impact on my community or other communities. And this proposal, I need to remind everyone is happening in the context of reduced educational cost sharing grants for many towns and cities and combined impacts can be significant. I don't know what this formula will mean to me. Currently the state is giving me about 70 percent of my high cost claims on special education. I don't know if I'll receive dollar one. I know that I'll only pay 100 percent of my claims and no more.

So for the same reason that you heard from my colleagues, the concern about predictability, relief from volatility, lacking an outline for accountability for those who create the formula, administer the funds; I have to oppose this and hope that you will consider not voting for it.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Representative McCarty but before you go, Representative Currey can you -- and I know you've addressed many of these

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concerns with other speakers, so is there anything you didn't touch on already that you want to touch on after Representative McCarty, please do so, okay. All right, Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you. I do have a very easy question. Just -- has CAPSS looked at -- have you surveyed the superintendents throughout the state and what -- what the results would be for that if you did.

FRAN RABINOWITZ: Yes, and the superintendents are -- more than 95 percent of the superintendents that I have spoken to or worked with are opposed. Actually I don't know of anyone who is in favor. There may be, but they didn't communicate to me. But I don't know that.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Currey. Just on the issues that you haven't already addressed 'cause they're -- they were in the room when you spoke earlier.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Yep, and I appreciate Representative McCarty's question. It is -- and I would just note for the record and for members, we have not been invited to come and sit down and present this to all of CAPSS and to all of their members to be able to fully explain what this is and what this is not and to clear up any sort of misconceptions that are being portrayed. So respectfully, I understand that she has had the conversation with her members, but we have not actually had the opportunity to present what this exactly is.

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I just want to clear up again, 'cause I know we cleared it up earlier, when we're talking about the administrative costs for what this potentially could be. In the legislation it does say cap it at no more than 1 percent. That is, as I said earlier, we are going to clarify that. Our folks that we have met with and assume this will be no more than out \$500,000 and so we're going to clearly say that in the language, so I think we need to get away from saying it's going to be \$2-\$5 million.

Also with regards to the uncertainty of not knowing what the formula is and all of that, I completely understand that and I respect that. But I think, as I asked Superintendent Carter earlier you all would argue that you know your districts and your towns better than a lot of our members do sitting around these tables. And so having said that, wouldn't give you and your members some comfort to know that a majority of that board that's going to be put together are going to be you and your colleagues who are the ones who are going to develop this and own this?

FRAN RABINOWITZ: Right now, Representative Currey there is a board that is 17 members, only one of which is certain to be an educator. Others might be but it is not with any certainty. CAPE is not even represented on that board and they are responsible for payment on special ed. If I could just say one thing to this. I don't want to leave here with the impression that we don't believe there are issues with special education. We do. We just -- and Representative Currey and I have had that conversation several times; I would like a cohesive -- a cohesive plan to address that. And I would like a work group put together that looked at the

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increased identification. We've gone from 11 to 15 percent in four years. We -- we don't know if SRBI or RTI is faithfully implemented across the state. We need to look at the innovative programs that exist within districts at recs that may not qualify for excess cost but are excellent and add to those.

And we also need to look at the cost and control of out of district placements because in some of the private entities the costs are astronomical. So I would ask for a work group being put together and let's look at all of it in a cohesive way.

REP. CURREY (11TH): And I appreciate that and I appreciate the fact that you took me up on the officer to help create some sort of a work group or task force that's going to address all of those issues, knowing that we're not solving all of education, special education problems here today or in a short session. I would also say that as noted earlier, there is going to be clarification around those positions on the board. They are intended to be your superintendents, your financial leaders with in the district and so forth; so it will be heavy on your side of things.

I also did have a conversation on the side with Patrice and she noted if there was an oversight, Kay definitely will be a member of the Board of Directors should this move forward.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony guys. I'll just say, we had a public forum on special education and a lot of the ideas Fran, that you just brought up came out in that testimony. And I'm all for another working group but from my understanding we've been going at this for the last five or six years and we're still here

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today. So is it me? I'm going to throw it in your lap and you come back with a solution, some ideas that we can generate from your perspective, aside from the fact simply funding it fully, 'cause that's unrealistic and you know it and I know it. I mean if we're going to fund to its full capacity then we wouldn't have the ECS problem. In pilot problems we never fund anything to the capacity. I think a better way is doing some of the things that you talk about more locally or more regionally, coming up with your own programs that are not as expensive to have some of the out placements that you talked about. I think that's the direction that we should be moving in as opposed to you know, just saying we need more money for the state or this won't work.

I don't -- I'm not 100 percent whether it will work but I know we're trying. I know -- I know Representative Currey's trying to solve this problem, a problem that's been around for a long time. So I'm -- I don't have a problem putting together a working group as long as we come out of there with something we can all agree with. And I know it's -- you know it's hard to get everybody on board but I would love to hear your input and then we'll bring our input then we might have a cake that we all can eat, all right. So thank you again for test -- your testimony.

FRAN RABINOWITZ: And we'll take you up on that.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Mr. Chairman, if I might.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Yes.

REP. CURREY (11TH): If I can respectfully ask now while I have you in front of me; will we have an

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opportunity to come out and actually present and speak to your members to be able to go through this?

FRAN RABINOWITZ: Absolutely.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Fantastic.

FRAN RABINOWITZ: You invited us in as the Executive Board and we came. But we would certainly open it up to you.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, I appreciate that.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Next up Faith Sweeney followed by Marlene -- oh, I'm sorry. Sit back down. You've got to get me earlier. Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm making trouble here, I'm sorry. [Laughing] Thank you. Just to thank you all for being here. I just -- I have a -- a quick question which is, were you to have another working group 'cause we did have one before that worked on this particular issue, this particular format and although I remember that we did have a clause in there that other solutions should be considered. I just wondered if in creating a work group on what other directions it -- would you have other directions in mind? Would you just consider this particular type of Captive insurance company or would there be other things that you would like to consider?

FRAN RABINOWITZ: I would very much like to -- I think my members would welcome the opportunity to work with practitioners and others to look at all of special ed in a cohesive manner. I'm not saying that the Captive insurance company wouldn't come into this perhaps, but I'm very, very concerned. As

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you know, I brought it up at the forum that we had on special ed. I'm concerned with the increase and the number of special ed students identified. We have 11,000 more now than we had in 13-14 and we have 30,000 fewer students statewide. I'm concerned about that.

I'm concerned about -- you know, I was in Bridgeport up until a couple of years ago. I watched children, young children being identified left and right for out of district placement that I felt could have been dealt with much better with intervention prior to that special ed. I would like to look at where we are with those intervention pyramids that we pushed 10 years ago. I'm not sure that they're in place in every district. And I -- I don't like work groups, I don't, but I will tell you that I do believe that with the right leadership in a work group you can get a whole lot done. Look what we did with unfunded mandates and professional development. You can have a -- many points of view in that work group and come out with some really solid and rich recommendations. I'd like to see that happen. Literacy works into it. Many of these students are identified because they can't read and we need to look at literacy, we need to look at SEL and I would beg for it, honestly. I begged for it the last two years, a work group just to look at this with timelines. If we had to meet four times a month or five times a month to make it happen I think it's important to our most vulnerable kids to -- to really look at this cohesively.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you very much for that. I think sometimes we -- we tend to become so mesmerized with the importance of money that we lose sight of what we're spending it on and sometimes we

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spend it on the wrong thing or then sometimes we spend it in the not most effective way.

JAN PERRUCCIO: If I could just, Representative Lavielle, if I could just add one more thing to what Fran Rabinowitz has said, is that the special education cost model task force was very challenged because we were only allowed to look at predictability. And when you're talking about something as complex as special education, funding or otherwise you have to look at the whole package, we have to look at -- we have to look at all of the funding. If we're looking for an equity model then we should be looking at all funding.

KATHLEEN GREIDER: And I do believe that there are proven strategies that work, that actually save districts and municipalities money but improve quality for our students. And I mentioned you know the -- the look at how can we build actual programs within our districts where students can access all aspect of our district and then tuitioning students to offset the cost and it actually benefits some of our smaller districts who just can't put a program together. In Farmington Valley we have several examples of that and we've shared those examples but they really don't then get expanded. I'm not sure why but there are several reports out there that I know I've contributed to that provide these very clear examples and we worked with an outside group, DM group that actually has outstanding recommendations that could be applied to all districts that would provide higher quality programs for our students within our school district. So the ideas are there, you know are out there in Connecticut and I just think that we need to come together and put those ideas out there and maybe get

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some outside experts in certainly. I think the more constituencies we have at the table, the better decision making that we make ultimately. So thank you all very much.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, thank you Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you for your testimony. Faith Sweeney

FAITH SWEENEY: Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Faith Sweeney, and I am a K-5 Literacy Coach in Westport Connecticut. I am here to speak about Raised Senate Bill 390, AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. As a graduate of Connecticut public schools, it is vital that I share my truth with you. Throughout my educational experience in Connecticut, I have been a victim of microaggressions, racial slurs, and academic prejudice. I was either the only student of color, or one of two students of color in my classes. I share this to stress how important it is to have a diverse teaching population.

Over the past 24 years, I've taught in Stamford, Greenwich and Westport. Communities where most of the student and teaching population was white. Throughout my teaching career, I have witnessed the same microaggressions, racial slurs and academic prejudice towards students of color. By high school, students of color often feel invisible. As a teacher of color, I recognize that my presence, voice, and actions give students as well as teachers the opportunity to base their judgements on personal experiences and connections—not generalizations and

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misconceptions that are a product of unconscious bias. Through those personal experiences each black, brown, tan, and white student and teacher becomes an ally for each other.

How do we expect our future leaders of the world to navigate the global community with compassion if their experiences are not representative of what they will face in their adult lives? We need to name, narrate and eradicate racism. Students and teachers must develop compassion, effectively problem solve and advocate for each other as global citizens. As current leaders of the world we need to create environments where students and teachers do not have to navigate this alone. Funding towards the fidelity of recruiting, retaining and supporting teachers of color will have a positive impact on the overall wellbeing of our students and teachers. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Spoken like a teacher. [Laughing] Just in time. Listen, appreciate you for coming up and giving your real-life, real-time testimony, what it really looks like for you. And imagine if you're going through that, imagine what the children are going through. Again, that's why we're pushing this Bill. We've got to diversify our teaching population. Any questions or comments from the circle? Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon and welcome. I see your Westport.

FAITH SWEENEY: I teach in Westport, I actually live in Bridgeport.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): I represent part of Westport. You had a couple of folks in Westport

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didn't you recently, some students who wrote a letter?

FAITH SWEENEY: Yes, yes, there was a letter that a student had written and representing other students of color at the high school level where they are experiencing the micro-aggressions, racial -- racial hatred and they do feel invisible. Actually my line about high school students being invisible is based on that article.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): No it was a -- it was quite -- it was quite remarkable. I would imagine that with your experiences and so on, if you have classrooms where you teach in Westport that are predominantly not filled with students representing minorities that you must certainly exert a very positive influence on them as well and they have much -- you all have much to learn from each other.

FAITH SWEENEY: Yes, we do.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you very much for coming.

FAITH SWEENEY: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Marlene and Ushwanda Mitchell you guys want to come up together. You're going to talk to us about a solution you may have for this issue.

MARLENE LOVANO: Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Marlene Lovanio. Together with my colleague, Ushwanda Mitchell we run a teacher's residency program and are here to testify on behalf of Raised Bill 390, AN

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ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

USHWANDA MITCHELL: My name is Ushwanda Mitchell and I am the Program Coordination of a teacher residency program. I'm here to speak in support of Senate Bill 390. I'm not going to spend the next few minutes talking about how important it is to have minority teachers in a classroom. We know the benefits of that as well as having the data to support it.

Instead I want to focus on my journey to become an educator. I entered education as a second career. When I decided to embark on this journey I knew there would be many obstacles that I would face. How could I work fulltime to provide for my family while attending school? What kind of support would I receive from my program? How difficult will it be for me to find a job once I've completed the program? There were also a few obstacles that I wasn't prepared for, like being the only minority enrolled in two of my teacher prep programs. Or struggling with passing one of the assessments that required me to become a certified teacher. It was the latter of the two that was the most difficult to overcome.

The Teacher Residency Program is designed to try eliminate some of these obstacles. Programs like this is something I wish had during my journey to become a teacher. From working closely with a mentor teacher from the first day of school to the last day earning a salary with benefits to help support your family and being able to take courses and then apply what you've learned the following day with your students and one of -- is one of the

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greatest benefits. Also being able to walk away from the program as a certified teacher with no student loan debt.

While it would have been great to have this program around while I was pursuing my certification I'm thankful that our current residents have been provided this opportunity and that I'm able to share my knowledge, my 15 years of experience as a minority teacher and support them as they move from resident to classroom teacher. Through the Residency Program we're able to change lives by offering a career pathway for people of color to become highly trained teachers and serve as role models and voices for our students. With program this provide a certification which includes course work and residency experience for minority teacher candidates at no cost to them.

MARLENE LOVANIO: With this program we are currently serving 6 males and 6 females of color who will be guaranteed positions as classroom teachers next year when certified. For the next cohort we are expanding to include other districts and 18 slots and we are going to be interviewing them this week. We are looking to fill that cohort with many more on the waiting list. We have a model that can be replicated across Connecticut to serve New Haven, Bridgeport, Waterbury and other areas. This residency model requires district funding for resident salaries and benefits as well as program costs. We feel that this program is a game changer to not only increase the number of teachers of color but also to change the economic situations of those teachers, and also the lives of Connecticut students by providing mirrors in our classroom teachers.

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Please opt in to providing fiscal support for residency programs.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. A couple of questions. You said you had six males in your program? What -- what -- what grades were the individuals who graduate from your program, what grades will they be teaching?

USHWANDA LOVANIO: Right now our program provides certification for one through six, grades one through six, but we're hoping to expand it to other grades as we move forward.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So if you had -- if you're going to potentially be adding six new young man of color to your teaching population, how would that effect the number you have currently in your school district?

MARLENE LOVANIO: We would have 8 in total possibly for that grade level.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay, so --

MARLENE LOVANIO: For elementary school teachers.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So currently right now you only have two?

MARLENE LOVANIO: We probably -- and I'm not 100 percent but as core content classroom teachers I believe we have two males of color.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Doesn't surprise me. Absolutely doesn't surprise me. And if you -- I was an elementary school teacher, 5th grade and 6th grade. If I can tell you the impact that a male teacher of color has on a student population you'll be spinning -- you'll be turning on your wheels.

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The data speaks to it. I'm glad you came today with a solution, not a question, not a concern, but you thought about a solution, which is more important than anything else. It's our responsibility to make sure your program is working and make sure we have people in that pipeline to educate our children. You've heard today how important it is. You have a program, you have a plan. Last question, who's teaching the potential teachers in your program?

MARLENE LOVANIO: So we use practitioners that are in the field so we have the specialists who are specialists in language arts, we have people who are specialists in trauma who come and teach our trauma class, we have special ed supervisors who are teaching our special education class. So these are practitioners who are well established in their field and also work within the schools on a daily basis to know the realities of our classrooms and our students and the teachers that they're working with.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So for the record you have educators who are teaching potential educators?

MARLENE LOVANIO: Absolutely.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay, okay. It's a long day, I can probably ask a whole number of questions but I'm going to stop right there. Any other questions? Representative Sanchez.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): It sounds like this program is phenomenal. The fact that you're paying them a salary while they're student teaching, while they're working toward their certification is just amazing 'cause they're not -- they're not adding to their debt sort to speak. And right now you're -- these

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teachers would be based in the City of Hartford, or will there be other cities you presently have?

MARLENE LOVANIO: So right now these teachers will be placed in correct schools and then later will rehab other districts that are joining us for Cohort Two, in and around the Hartford region.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay. And let's say we were to come up with the funds, what are we talking about per person if we would expand this program to let's say, 50 individuals?

MARLENE LOVANIO: So depending on district contracts we would be looking at 50 to 60,000 per resident to include the resident's salary, the resident's benefits as well of the coordination with an experienced distinguished teacher that they would work under. So we pay a stipend to the distinguished teacher who they work with for a full entire year.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): That sounds good. Also, so what do they have to do? Is there like a lottery system in order to get in? Do they apply and then you select first come, first serve or you go through the application?

USHWANDA MITCHELL: We go through an application process. We actually have interviews this Wednesday. The application closed on -- this past Friday and so the first step is they meet with the three of us and we interview them for a 15-minute interview and then they're invited back, they come back again and they're interviewed by a panel and then if they're invited back for a third round then they actually do a classroom lesson with a small group of students and they are observed that way ad

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then we choose. And then we're also -- like Marlene said, we invited other districts so we already have some people that are coming on so we're excited about it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And if you'll please excuse me and just -- if you could tell me where you're located. I'm trying -- I'm going through the Bill and trying to get this understood correctly. I'm pleased to hear about the program and that you're claiming that next year you'll even move to 18 slots, you believe; but where are you located?

MARLENE LOVANO: So right now we're in Hartford. We offer the program through the Capital Regional Education Council.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. That's what I thought, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So lastly, as far as cost is concerned; I believe in the program, I think it works. But I think other school districts may have skin in the game. And what I mean by that, if they have potential individuals who have a bachelor's degree who may be working in their schools as a para, as a long-term sub or any other position, I believe other school districts who want to be a part of this program, they find the investment to put individuals in this program. So we have to go hand in hand. I don't think all of the resources should just come from the state or from (inaudible). If your district is serious about diversifying their teacher population ie., any school district then you

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should put money towards these programs. And it would demonstrate to the public that you -- you're not just giving lip service, you're serious about hiring people. Because if you were here earlier we know there are a number of people out here right now of color who have teacher certification and can't get a job, which I don't -- I don't understand that.

But I think there should be a level of commitment financially from any school district if they're going to really do this. And finally, lastly, you have -- do you have the ability to bring this program I will say down state maybe to the greater New Haven area or Bridgeport or things of that -- areas like that. Can you currently do something like that?

MARLENE LOVANIO: Well considering last year we got approved on May 1st and we started our cohort in the middle of June, I think we can do anything. It took us a month and a half and we had 12 people in the cohort and got started. We're also part of a -- a national group that looks at different funding models for the program so we do have some different ideas about how districts can buy into the model and support the -- the model resident salaries and other initiatives. We feel that there -- there needs to be buy in from individual districts because as we heard other people testify earlier, it's important that the culture is shifting and accepting of different -- of teachers of color in -- in the schools, making sure that it is a welcoming atmosphere, that everybody is looking towards each other as highly qualified individuals and supporting. And it also has a great effect on not only our students of color but all of our students; black, white, brown, tan, you name it.

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So to answer your question there are different funding models that do involve district buy-in as well as having the sustainability down the road, and we are looking forward to expanding this.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Up next Marquis Johnson followed Sheena Graham and then Nancy Andrews.

MARQUIS JOHNSON: Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, I am an educator and I am here in support of SB 390. In general the teaching profession is in crisis. And these challenges often have more devastating impact on minority groups. And so when I mention teaching as an option to past students they raise many valid concerns. They worry about their ability to financially support themselves and their families. They worry about their physical and mental safety and being marginalized due to the lack of diversity in the field. And some of these same grievances are expressed by me and other educators of color.

One educator of color told me that he left the formal school setting because the educational environment would be a violence to his emotional and physical self. So not only must we create incentives for minority studies to enter profession but we must make sure that the school buildings are environments that professionals of color want to be in. I did not feel welcome in my own K-12 experience and so teaching was the last career that I thought I would pursue. I did not see people who looked like me at the front of the room nor did the curriculum and school culture lend itself to my cultural experience.

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It's for this reason I urge the proposed task force to study the full K through 12 experience and its impact on students of color. It is almost exactly one year later since my first time in front of you testifying on behalf of HB 7082 to include African American studies in the public school curriculum. When I heard that it passed I felt proud to be an educator in Connecticut. We make it evident through our actions that we value diversity and passing SB 390 will once again demonstrate our willingness to take the necessary steps to ensure that our schools are places where everyone is welcome.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Again, spoken like a teacher. First of all I want to thank you for choosing education as your career path. Just like myself, education was a second career. I jumped in it really early and I understand why so many of our young people will choose not to be educators because the experiences they had as kids in their classrooms so I get it, I get it. But people like yourself and I have to go back and educate folks that teaching is a great middle class career and the impact that you'll have on young people for the rest of their lives, you can't find it anywhere else. So I appreciate you for being an educator and staying in the classroom. Any other questions or comments from my colleagues? Representative Gibson.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. How you doing?

MARQUIS JOHNSON: Great, thank you.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Windsor, right?

MARGUIS JOHNSON: Yes.

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REP. GIBSON (15TH): You're the guy from the video, right? [Laughing] Great job on the video.

MARGUIS JOHNSON: I am the guy from the commercial, thank you. [Laughing]

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Any other questions, comments? Thank you. Sheena Graham, Nancy Andrews and Michelle Ku.

SHEENA GRAHAM: Good afternoon members of the Education Committee. My name is Sheena Graham. I have been an educator for 37 years, 35 of them in my current district of Bridgeport, Connecticut. I am Connecticut's 2019 Teacher of the Year. Thank you for considering Senate Bill 390. Based on data from 2019, Connecticut needs to hire more than 19,000 minority teachers in order to be as diverse as its student population is now. At the current rate it would take us over 180 years. Retaining the minority teachers while continuing to recruit is essential, but it depends on addressing working conditions, financial inequities, and offering both salaries and health benefits that keep up with inflation.

I left teaching in Bridgeport for two years due to poor working conditions. My classroom did not have windows. The intake for the vent was in a garage. Truck delivery fumes and other odors lived in my classroom. I grew a lump on my neck that had to be surgically removed. Fortunately, it was benign. I've taught in classrooms where the students and I wore our coats due to lack of heat, and rooms where nosebleeds were common due to intense heat. I've dealt with large class sizes squished into too little space, too little planning time, too few social workers and too few counselors to handle the

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social emotional needs of our students. All of this equals stressful working conditions that are not recruitment or retention friendly.

Financial inequities for me have meant having to work more than one job, and as many as four jobs, my entire teaching career, having my utilities cut off more than once, going without the correct prescription in my eyeglasses for over four years, paying just the interest on school loans, which means the balance never gets lower, and having to choose between caring for ill parents or providing for my children. Again, conditions that are not recruitment or retention friendly.

My first African American female educator in high school made me realize I could be a teacher. Her presence in the classroom made a difference in my future. I found out that I did the same for an educator in my district. This Bill I'm hoping will cause that to trend on a larger scale. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Yes, Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much for being here and your testimony today and the description of some of the things that you went through as a teacher in the Bridgeport school system. I just wondered, do you think that the access to resources that perhaps Bridgeport is problematic in terms of the some of the environmental problems that you experienced and some of the difficulties we have in attracting minority teachers to our urban centers?

SHEENA GRAHAM: I do think that because we've underfunded for so long that it's catching up with us.

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And I do think that is a deterrent. In my department -- I'm a music teacher, and we lost African American -- three African American males and one Hispanic male just in my department in a year's time. And they went to districts that were less than 15 to 20 miles away.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): And what about the classroom size? Could you just tell us a little bit more about that in Bridgeport versus the rest of the region?

SHEENA GRAHAM: We are supposed to have 29 as our class size, however, some of the rooms cannot comfortably fit 29 students. So we -- we do have issues with -- even though there is a stated size, having the space to fit them in to adequately teach them.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. And again, thank you for choosing education as a career, appreciate you. Nancy Andrews. Oh, who? I didn't -- I was -- come back, come back, come back Bridgeport Teacher of the Year 2019, I mean Connecticut Teacher of the Year 2019. Representative Miller.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon and I want to echo the Senator's comments and thank you for staying in the classroom. And I apologize for the conditions that you and your colleagues, just not in Bridgeport but across the state, the conditions that you have to work under. And so my question to you is in your statement you mentioned that the -- there were four individuals that left; do you think it's because of the

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conditions that they left or can you shine a little light on that?

SHEENA GRAHAM: Sure. I think it was a combination of conditions in that -- as a teacher I have had to invest in my classroom every year in order to do my job. So that means a portion of my salary every single year has gone into that position. So I think that's part of it and the fact that our salaries are not equitable to those that are around us. So for example, if I'm a young person coming out of college and I've got student loan debt and you're telling me all I've got to do is cross this little line and I'm making one of them, his salary jumped \$12,000, another one it was \$18,000 and the other one it was \$25,000. I'm still paying college loans.

REP. MILLER (145TH): If I may Mr. Chair, so do you think some type of incentive to help maybe with student loans because that's bounced around here as well, and housing incentives that those would be help or be an incentive for people to stay in the school system. Because I'll tell you why. I went to school in segregated south so I know the importance of having teachers that look like you teach you. And I'm interesting in knowing what we can do as legislators to try to retain those teachers because we did put forth the Bill that says that we have to do it as a state, but we also need to know what the teachers are experiencing or what the hindrances are, right, to prevent us from doing that. And so I would be interested to know. I'll give you my card that you can email me or your colleagues can email me just to give us some ideas what the state can do to attract and retain teachers.

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SHEENA GRAHAM: Well, may I make one comment? When I initially came through, and this is going back 'cause this was in the early 80s. I was told that if I taught in a Title 1 school that my loans would be forgiven, but I needed to teach for three years. Now this is going back to the 80s. While I taught at Blackham School in Bridgeport and after teaching there for the three years I applied to have them forgiven and they said, oh the students are Title 1 but the school is not in a Title 1 area. So they were not forgiven. So --

REP. MILLER (145TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and they for your testimony. Thank you for taking the time to come up and spend with us.

SHEENA GRAHAM: You're very welcome.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Nancy Andrews followed by Michelle Ku.

NANCY ANDREWS: Good afternoon ,embers of the Education Committee, my name is Nancy Andrews, and I am the Communications Director at the Connecticut Education Association. I've submitted written testimony in support of Raised Bill 390, AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. CEA strongly supports this Bill and has been leading the call to diversify our teaching profession through a variety of different programs and initiatives. Just last week we kicked off a new major public awareness campaign amplifying our efforts to diversify Connecticut's teaching force through a statewide campaign aimed at encouraging more young people of color to pursue careers in teaching. The new campaign is called Teaching Is Calling You. It highlights teachers as role models for their students as well as mentors for young

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people who may never have considered the positive difference they could make as educators. The public awareness campaign includes TV, radio, print and social media ads, and video vignettes, all in English and Spanish that illustrate the positive influence teachers of color have on their students and school communities. All of the campaign information is housed on a special page at cea.org/teachingiscalling. There are links to documents and tools about how to become a teacher as well as important research and information on the issue.

You've heard from some of our great teachers who are part of the campaign, Marquis who is one of the stars of the TV ad, Sheena and Faith, but there are many other teachers who were unable to attend today and asked me to share their stories which are included in my written testimony. CEA is deeply committed to this issue and with support from the National Education Association will continue to enhance its efforts to create a diverse teaching force that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of Connecticut. I wish I could show you our TV ad featuring Marquis, but I hope that you've seen it or will be seeing it. Part of my testimony in the packet I included some of our materials and I hope you'll take a look at that. They feature our CEA Advisor with Marquis again on the cover and then a center spread story with some of our teachers including Sheena and some other teachers as well. I do have extra copies if anyone is interested in these materials. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Okay. Michelle followed by Reverend Ernestine Holloway.

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MICHELLE EMBREE KU: Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Ranking Members of the Education Committee, and Education Committee members, thank you for having me. I'm Michelle Embree Ku. I'm the Chair of the Board of Education in Newtown, and also the Chair of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Committee for State Government Relations. CABE has offered testimony on several Bills. I'd like to highlight a few of them.

CABE strongly supports SB 390 and any efforts to increase minority/teacher representation in our schools. I want all students in all communities to have the opportunity to learn from educators from a variety of backgrounds, races and cultures. Because CABE is committed and deeply involved in this effort we request that CABE and CAPSS be included in the membership of the task force. CABE has created an equity tool kit to support communities in the recruitment of diverse educational workforces.

The CABE testimony also include strong support for HB 5378 which addresses professional development for staff in areas of social and emotional learning. This is a high priority for our district and all districts throughout the state.

CABE also strongly supports HB 5438, the recreation of a task force to address professional development mandates. We also suggest adopting the recommendation of the 2016 task force to include a professional development council to review proposed legislation to avoid over-committing our districts in professional development in the future and assuring the effectiveness of any new proposals.

I'd also like to speak in some more detail about HB 5433, which would create the special education

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excess cost Cooperative. I oppose the creation of the cost Cooperative as proposed and would prefer that the excess cost grant, a mechanism previously enacted to address this very issue be fully funded to allow 100 percent reimbursement for excess costs instead of the current level of approximately 70 to 75 percent. My main concern is that the solution offered in this Bill creates another level of bureaucracy without addressing the underlying issues and Fran Rabinowitz spoke to these, the identification of students and the delivery of services.

I'm additionally concerned that districts will have no choice about participation in the Cooperative in Newtown. We are working towards a model of self-insuring and district self-insuring in this way would not be able to opt out of the Cooperative. And I thank you very much for hearing my testimony today. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Representative Bolinsky.

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Ku, thank you so much for being here and being such an effective Board of Education Chair in my hometown. On this special education cost Cooperative the -- can you elaborate a little bit on you know how you think that will effect delivery of services?

MICHELLE KU: I'm not -- I'm mostly concerned about it creating a disincentive for the identification of students because of the total number of special education student playing in a role in determining what a community would -- would contribute. I worry about that disincentive for the actual

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identification of some of our lower needs special education students.

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): Okay, all righty. Other concerns that you have about it, 'cause I've heard concerns today from other folks that thought that it might you know, be subject to an ECS type formula, which would -- which might put a town like Newtown on the outs you know going forward.

MICHELLE KU: So ability to pay being a part of the formula, and I don't know enough about the formula to know exactly how it would effect Newtown specifically. But certainly the volatility that we've seen in the ECS formula in past years, and I realize that's leveling out now, I'm not really sure how it would effect Newtown just because I don't know what's involved in the formula exactly.

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): I'm sorry to put you on the spot with that because none of us really understand the intricacies of it, the -- we all have an interest in certainly special education. This particular Committee has you know done an awful lot of task force work and done a lot in regard to autism and dyslexia and I know that there's work going on in Newtown to support that. The last thing I would want to see you know is a shortage of funding. And I also, not a question but just a closing comment, I commend you for coming here and actually having the courage to say, why don't you just fully fund the special education cost sharing fund because that's basically the crux of the matter; is it not?

MICHELLE KU: It's -- what I understand it was set up for though, I understand that the funding is an issue and that -- that is the problem with funding.

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REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): Yeah, it's a reality that we have to face, so it's a good conversation to have. Thank you for taking the time and devoting your whole day to speaking to us about this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions or comments? Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Yeah, I also wanted to thank you for coming out and voicing your concerns and I know you know we have sat down with a number of folks and had a lot of these similar conversations around the uncertainty and the overall issues of special education funding and I would love nothing more than to fully fund everything and anything that we possibly could. I think what we just need to make we're keeping in mind is that this is potentially going to help safeguard your district so if you do have that one or two unexpected students move into your particular district and have that cost of \$500,000 that you just did not budget for, this would actually provide that safeguard while not touching or contemplating or even looking at the delivery of services. All of those processes are still in place at the local level and working with the State Department of Education around the approval process. So this does not look to touch any of that and allows the locals to have that control that they always have had and will continue to have.

And again, I don't believe anyone would be on the outs as the former speaker mentioned through this model. No one would pay anything greater than they -- their excess cost for the prior year while receiving that 100 percent reimbursement, so.

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Again, a lot of this has to do with clearing up some of the misconceptions and the information that is out there. But if you or anybody you know would like to sit down and kind of go through this we're happy to do so at any point, at any time.

MICHELLE KU: If I may? The one thing that Newtown has been working for is providing a self-insurance fund for special education, which I understand you know, there are communities -- and it certainly -- the volatility has effected Newtown in the past, but we would not be able to opt out of this insurance Cooperative, even though we would have been working towards our own insurance model.

REP. CURREY (11TH): That is correct. In this model there is no opt out. Your municipal side of your -- of the town government would be paying that yearly contribution with that reimbursement going directly back to your school district. So it's not anything that you on the district side would have to worry about budgeting for after that first year it's moved out.

MICHELLE KU: Thank you.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony.

MICHELLE KU: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Reverend Ernestine Holloway followed by Wildaliz Bermudez, Bermudez, Wildaliz. I didn't say I was the best.

REV. ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: Good evening, good afternoon. I'm Reverend Holloway. I want to talk about Raised Bill 390 and 5436. To me they're one.

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When you talk about hair and little girls, it's one. And I'm happy. Usually I'm telling you what I don't like about what you all are doing. Today I'm happy. I'm glad. I went to school in New York and you would think it was a really diverse city, but I didn't have teachers that looked like until I got older and that meant a lot to me. And I didn't understand it until one day they let me teach a class and they were cutting up, 'cause you know our kids can really cut up. And when I walked in the classroom and I turned around and I looked at everybody and put my hands on my hip and I started writing, I turned around and said, is there a problem and everybody got quiet. And then I realized the problem is they don't have teachers that don't look like them.

I have two girls. You don't hear me talk about my children often but I have five of them. Two of them suffered with identity crisis because of their skin, because of their hair. One no longer wanted to be African American anymore. The other one didn't want to go to school 'cause her lips were too big and her hair was an issue. I have one with a brain injury that -- sorry, that she suffered in a charter school in New London because she didn't look like them and didn't act like them. Two girls took a chair and hit her in the head with it. And she has a brain injury that's going to last her for her life.

So I applaud that you guys are going to go in a step in the right direction so you won't have to experience [crying] -- excuse my tears, what I've experienced. I've got a chemistry major at home that won't become a school teacher that she wants to become because they picked on her because of her

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hair and the color of her skin, and she couldn't go to anybody because nobody looked like her. They didn't understand. And so I don't know how this is going to work, but I pray that you get it right because it's important to see somebody succeed that looks like you. And you know, I defend all children. I think the schools and churches should look like the society that we live in. So this is one time I'm going to applaud you. I don't know how you're going to fund it and how you're going to make it work, but I will say this, you will change lives and those kids will be able to look at a male teacher or female teacher, some Asian, some black, some Puerto Rican, some Dominican and look like them. And plus, then they can't get over because we know them. No, that doesn't work.

And I'll leave you with this. When I was growing up I went to a program called The Door, and I experienced some trauma. And the lady kept looking at me smiling and I wanted to know why was she smiling 'cause it was so serious. So what they said was, let's get her another counselor, so Russell Chamberlain walked in and I sat down and told him what I was going through. He didn't smile, he nodded his head. And he said, you know she meant well and I said, yeah but she was smiling. It's so critical that she doesn't smile when I'm telling her that I'm walking through gunshots to get to school. But when Rusty came in, this is what he did; he changed my life and told me, even though I live in those situations I can be anything that I want to be and then I met David Deacons who looked like me, who was the Mayor and showed me that I could be anything that I want to be. This is what you're doing. You're creating another generation that will see

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people that look like them and be inspired to the be the teachers you want them to be. So thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Well again, thank you for your testimony. Representation is very important, extremely important and we get things done here. Don't worry about the money. This is a Committee that gets things done so I'm not worried about the funding. I just -- I just need more people who want to come into this profession and give an opportunity in this profession, because it's the best profession in the world. Thank you. Any questions from the circle? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Just a quick comment. Welcome Rev -- Rev -- Reverend Holloway. I think I see you at a lot of different hearings [laughing] and you're very interested in many issues and thank you. But I just wanted to make a quick comment for coming here today and expressing your concerns. Was your daughter discriminated against for her hair?

REV. ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: Yes. She was called nappy head, billow. I told her I was not perming her hair, 'cause that's just not what we do. I said, you're going to have to learn and then when I went to the school, the oldest one what I said was, you better find some children that look like her or you're going to have a problem and said, and you're going to meet Ernestine who is her mother so the next day the little girl looked like her, that ended. But my baby girl, because she's mixed race it was even harder for her. That's the one that has the brain injury.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Right. And that was the second part of my comment. I'm very sorry to learn

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about that incident and to share that with us, and thank you for all your advocacy.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Wildaliz followed by Jeff Leake.

EVA BERMUDEZ ZIMMERMAN: So Wildaliz is in a council meeting. She was about to start a council meeting so I'm here instead. Eva Bermudez Zimmerman. She wrote down her thoughts and I will summarize and then give the rest of the time to Cynthia and to Shelly with their opinions.

So thank you Co-Chairs McCrory and Sanchez and Committee members of Education. Thank you for the time for discussing the important topics and diversity and teaching staffing levels here in Connecticut schools. I come before you today representing not only in her case, Hartford, but also in her case a City Councilperson. I guess to make it easier and then I'll submit testimony on her behalf and speak from the heart because we wrote this --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): It's easier to just speak from your heart.

EVA BERMUDEZ ZIMMERMAN: It is, and then you have it on record. I just don't want to try to be -- [laughing].

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): And that's for everyone. If you already submitted testimony you'll be better off just coming up and summarizing and speaking from your chest as opposed to just reiterating what you already presented to us. Thank you. Give her her two minutes please.

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EVA BERMUDEZ ZIMMERMAN: Thank you. To summarize, my sister, my brother and I grew up here in Hartford and we had the opportunity to grow up here in Hartford because our father was offered a teaching incentive to get his -- another master's degree and become a teacher here in Hartford and move his family down from Puerto Rica and raise the three of us. In that time there was the incentive to try to get more bilingual teachers and more diversity and minority teachers in the Hartford school systems and with his teacher salary it enabled the three of us to have a very, very comfortable middle class reality. And this middle class reality with his teaching salary gave us the ability to interact with other teachers who of -- were of color like us.

We saw our teacher, Mr. Feliciano come to school every day with a smile on his face and teach us grammar and how to make sure that we were translating correctly because we were bilingual students. We also saw one of my father's students, Mr. Jose Calone become a principal right now and diversity in the classroom is not just about who you see in the teaching classroom but seeing yourself in that teacher and that educator. And luckily and fortunately enough for us, my siblings and I saw that every single day in that time at Hartford public school systems, 20 years ago. Unfortunately now we're having that conversation about retention and diversity, which is extremely important. And I can tell you again firsthand that being the daughter of an educator, he prioritized his students as much as he did us. Every single day he gave a piece of himself and piece of his soul and he made sure that these students saw that they could also be educators, that they could also be administrators,

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that they can become the future of America and become what America is, the melting pot of culture and diversity.

I know other people testified for Senate Bill 390, but I do hope that you support it and that you take into consideration what America looks like and what Connecticut could be as a leader to make sure that we're extremely diverse and other little kids like myself see themselves in their teachers.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you.

SHELLYE DAVIS: Hi, I just want to -- I'm here in support of HB 5439, THE ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES. What I'd like to say is, there are three unions besides AFT-CT. You have AFSCME, CSEA and MEUI. Together we represent thousands of paraprofessionals throughout Connecticut public schools. We contribute to the education and care of children during the school day. And to sum it up our proposal was made to the Education Committee and was in part inspired by a series of Bills from Washington state. What we're asking to create a uniform system of para minimum educational and training requirements. This proposal would direct the already existing school Paraprofessional Advisory Council to put together a set of in depth recommendations covering a range of important issues such as pay rates, health care coverage, retirement benefits, training and educational requirements for paras, classroom safety, classroom substitutes for paras, and career development. By doing this work through the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council we can ensure that paras would be at the center of the work.

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And so let me close with, para educators are among our schools hardest worked and lowest paid employees. It is past time to recognize the important work of paras and to take legislative action that will address issues around career development, training, qualifications, requirements, classroom safety, health insurance, and an equitable living wage. And I am Shellye Davis. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Now you get one minute to sum it up.

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: I get one minute? Okay.
[Laughing]

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Put a clock on her.

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: I'm Cynthia Ross-Zweig and I'm from New Fairfield, Connecticut. And I also in support of HB 5439, Sections 6 and 7 specifically. I'd like to talk about that there is no consistency in paras and how they're trained or the benefits they have, how much sick time they have, how they are paid or even how many hours that they work. And many towns paras don't even receive basic insurance coverage. They don't have the option to participate in the state plan. And often when the insurance is available, for paras it's simply not affordable based upon their salary.

Paras are often paid the least and charged the most based upon a rate versus pay. Some paras must come into work sick because they can't stay out, otherwise, they receive no pay or are reprimanded if they use their benefits. In one town, a para educator may earn \$20 an hour while another town pays basic minimum wage. [Ringing]

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): And therefore in conclusion.
[Laughing]

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: In conclusion, I would ask that you please support H Bill -- HB 5439, specifically Section 6 and 7 and allow some revision in the way paras are structured across the state.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none, we'll move on. Jeff followed by Tom Nicholas and then Andrew Feinstein. No Jeff? Okay. Thomas Nicholas, Andrew Feinstein.

ANDREW FEINSTEIN: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. I presume that I get the time from those other two witnesses, so I've got six minutes.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Absolutely wrong.
[Laughing]

ANDREW FEINSTEIN: I'm Andrew Feinstein. I'm here to represent special education equity for kids in Connecticut and I really appreciate all of you sticking around to listen to all this testimony. Let me cover five issues in 26 seconds each.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right, go. [Laughing]
Give him two minutes.

ANDREW FEINSTEIN: Cost collaborative. We support it. We think this is a step forward. This does predictability. Everybody gets 100 percent cost reimbursement. What's unpredictable, or not really unpredictable but what changes from year to year is the premiums and how those premiums are designed are something which the Board of Directors needs to work out. So the issue of predictability I think is a false issue. There's lots and lots wrong with the

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excess cost system that now exists and this Bill does not cure all of that but it's a step towards doing that and it's actually going to provide us some of the data we need to make those changes.

Second issue, social/emotional learning. Three Bills that are before us today have language that can turn social/emotional learning. There's real serious techniques. Teaching teachers and other staff how to do that right is really important but my biggest point is, that the polar opposite of social/emotional learning is exclusionary discipline practices, suspension, expulsion, calling the cops. Calling the parents to take the kid home, and as long as that's the dominant paradigm in so many schools, social/emotional learning doesn't have a chance. So if we want SEL to succeed we need to put a real brake on those other exclusionary practices.

Third issue, technical high school. For years the technical high schools have in fact discriminated against kids with disabilities. This legislation seeks to deal with that. Now I understand that we've got some real concerns with the safety. [Ringing] And in conclusion -- [laughing].

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): My man. [Laughing]

ANDREW FEINSTEIN: Opportunity gap. There's an enormous gap between the performance of kids on special ed and kids who are not on special ed. That gap should be reduced over time because special ed's after all a remedial program. It hasn't been reduced over time. The data shows exactly the opposite. We would like a seat on that task force, on the opportunity gap so disability becomes part of that. And I'll skip the next issue. Thank you for your time.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): No, thank you. Any questions? Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you for your testimony. And I just wanted to try and connect the social/emotional learning with the idea of the trust fund fully funding a special education because I think that there's a connection there that we haven't quite made.

ANDREW FEINSTEIN: Fully funding special education excess costs will certainly help, but excess costs as you understand is only for those 1 percent of students that have costs that are more than 4-1/2 times the average per pupil for the district. We need to -- we need substantially more funding throughout the entire program.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): And do you think it has an impact on alliance districts more than other districts that are not alliance districts?

ANDREW FEINSTEIN: I did the data on the this and the amounts set for student in alliance districts on special ed kids is about 60 percent of the amount spent by other districts on special education. And that's -- that's an outrage.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): I'm sorry. Representative Currey.

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REP. CURREY (11TH): My apologies that I missed the majority of your testimony but I just want to thank you and your organization for your support of the special ed Cooperative that we have put forth.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Robyn Kaplan followed by Elka Spencer, and then Kate Field.

ROBYN KAPLAN CHO: I guess this is approaching evening, good afternoon.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Yeah, it's after 5:00.

ROBYN KAPLAN CHO: Well, I'm going to speak from the heart; that's what I do. And I'm here to discuss the Raised Bill 5378. And I'm really impressed with all the legislation that's coming through, possibly coming through and how it fits together and works together. And my concern about the Bill is the comment that was just made about special education students and -- in terms of how we treat them and what we do with them in terms of social/emotional skills.

Let me back up. I'm concerned about the type of training that will go through. I know that we're legislating training but as we're legislating this training, what are we doing to keep it going and making sure that it's implemented appropriately. So for example, I'll give you a hardcore example. There are phrases such as PBIS. There are phrases such as responsive classroom. And there are programs, trauma-based instruction. But what does that look like and how does that play out?

When it's played out in the classroom, this is my 30th year, and I'll be honest I'm usually the one -- this overlaps with the one about teachers of color. I'm that person that's often carrying that invisible

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burden because I'm one of the few. Well you know, you just -- those are the classes you get. That's what you do. Well that's what we're supposed to do and we can do that together and I do believe that everyone can do that jointly. But you start giving training and then it comes back in the classroom and teachers are overwhelmed because we are still lacking with the increased special ed population that either we're creating or that we're just identifying more frequently; we're not servicing them appropriately because we're short staffed. We don't have social workers and psychologists to address them. The ratio given the number the children who are coming into the district who are identified under the Adverse Childhood Experiences Ratings which runs from 0 to 10, we have children showing up with 4 and 5. We increasingly have children in primary grades being identified as having PTSD. They don't want to necessarily wait for you to work with someone else and I think that part of that is that we don't have the manpower one you get back into the classroom. Now I have these skills. How can I work with my 20 or 25 when I've got 3 or 4 who have significant issues?

So I would like that looked at, but I'm really pleased that we're looking at this in -- and my other thing I wanted to say is, I taught -- I taught in Hartford for 21 years and now I teach in Bloomfield and I've been there for 9 years, and increasingly I see students coming at a younger and younger age who do need help and they don't -- one of the things that we can look at is keeping them in the district like you -- like a lot of people have said.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Right.

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ROBYN KAPLAN CHO: What can we do to keep them in their district? What can we do -- because it's cheaper to get a social worker now than to incarcerate them for 10, 20 years later?

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): I agree. Thank you. Wait a minute. Somebody might have a question. [Laughing] Any questions from the circle? Thank you though. Kate Field followed by Brendan Murphy and then Ray Rossomando.

KATE FIELD: Distinguished members of the Education Committee, good evening. My name is Kate Field and I'm the Teacher Development Specialist at Connecticut Education Association. Before joining the staff at CEA I was a school administrator and teacher for 20 years in Connecticut. It's a real privilege to be here today in front of you advocating for students in the profession I've loved my entire adult life.

Rather than reiterate all the points in my written testimony I would ask you instead to please refer to the specific proposals included in it. I'd rather spend my time discussing the severity of the mental health crisis that students are experiencing across Connecticut and the United States. Currently one out of every four students has a diagnosed anxiety disorder. One out of three requires regular counselling for mental health issues and that number doubles in urban areas. In less than 10 years mental health problems with the single greatest cause of disability in the United States at great financial costs in terms of lost productivity.

While some of the causes of this problem are beyond our control, many of them are not. What we need to do is develop a comprehensive plan that addresses

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the crisis holistically rather than approach it in a piecemeal fashion that addresses only symptoms and leaves the underlying problems to worsen. Very young children should not be so stressed out at school that they dread going. Our emphasis on core academic preparation in literacy and math beginning as early as Pre-K simply defies common sense and cognitive science. Children learn by playing. Pressuring young children to meet cognitively inappropriate standards and then subjecting them to repeated standardized testing they do not yet have the skills to complete is not just counterproductive, it verges on abuse. No wonder our kindergartners are throwing chairs and tearing their classrooms apart. Ten years of this approach has yielded nothing. Test scores are flat, the opportunity gap is still glaring and all we have to show for our current approach is a generation of stressed anxious young adults. This just has to stop.

I conclude by asking you to please consider the specific proposals outlined in my written testimony requiring teachers to take professional development and social/emotional learning is not a bad idea if it's part of a comprehensive plan, but alone, it sabotages the entire effort by making the slow -- making it the slow responsibility of teachers rather than the responsibility of each and every one of us. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. Do we have any questions from the Committee?
Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I really appreciate you pointing out that mental

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health is such -- has to be a high priority as we go through this. I have not had a chance to go through all of your testimony but I will. I know -- I just wanted to ask you though, do you make recommendations toward a comprehensive plan?

KATE FIELD: Yes, I do. Yes, there's extensive recommendations.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. 'Cause we do have, as you said, we want to make sure that it's all of the effort that we're doing in a lot of different areas, that we pull this all together and that we don't just place on our teachers, that this is a group effort by all of us.

KATE FIELD: Exactly. It has to be a group effort.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): A holistic approach to the child, but thank you. I'll read your testimony and get back to you.

KATE FIELD: Thank you. I just stress again that the solutions have to treat the underlying causes and not just the surface.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Right, and I'm very grateful that you stayed in education, thank you.

KATE FIELD: Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Brendan Murphy. [Loud buzzing] Okay. So Brendan Murphy, no Brendan Murphy? Ray Rossomando.

RAY ROSSOMANDO: Good evening.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Good evening.

RAY ROSSOMANDO: Education Committee Chair, Chairman Sanchez and members of the Education Committee.

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Children facing trauma in social/emotional learning challenges are crying out for help and it's not just in Connecticut, it's nationwide. We're hearing it from teachers across the country. Today you've heard a little bit about some of the needed resources, but you'll notice in the packet or in the testimony today there are over 50 or 60 individual submissions by teachers saying, although professional development is helpful, it's not nearly sufficient to address the issue in a comprehensive way. We really need to address the crisis of trauma and the social/emotional challenges in a very comprehensive way.

And I come to you today to say that it's probably as frustrating to Committee members as it is to teachers to hear that we -- we can't do the right thing because the right thing costs money. And I'm saying maybe Connecticut can do the right thing. Maybe we can say yes to doing something better and I say that because, as I mentioned earlier, this is an issue that's across the country and one state has already taken great steps to tackle this problem, that's Oregon. And I think you should look to Oregon as a model and that's what I basically testify to in my written remarks. But they passed landmark legislation that generates \$2 billion a year, most of which is -- is actually targeted towards social workers, mental health professionals, to pay for other student support, smaller class sizes, more reasonable special education caseloads.

And they did this because they pulled together a bicameral bipartisan team of legislators to do a tour of the state, talking to educators, talking to parents, talking to community leaders to find out what they could do to make a difference the schools,

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recognizing that this was a crisis. And they also teamed up with another coalition that was corporations and unions to identify revenue sources and together they did. And they passed this this year and it's bringing in over \$200 billion a year to Oregon's education and they're earmarking \$200 to \$300 million a year to tackle this very problem. So I bring this as an example and I hope you get a chance to look through the resources that I've linked because it really is a model for how this state can -- can proceed in tackling this problem.

We've had conversations with some of the other stakeholders and education including CABE, CAPSS, CAS, some of the people you spoke with today. Other people social/emotional learning collaborative and many others across the state who see this is a major issue and want to work together to tackle it recognizing how important it is. So, hope my researches are helpful to you. You'll hear some more from other teachers talking about what we really need to do to address the underlying issue and -- which you know is impacting most significantly the kids from Pre-K to second grade and obviously thereafter as well. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. I don't have the resources or actually I don't have my laptop in front of me so I can't look at what you've submitted but I will look into it and I will check into what Oregon, the state of Oregon is doing as well. 'Cause you're absolutely right, we -- we really need to look into that. This is just professional development. We're also talking about how when teachers are getting -- are going through the certification as well as giving them some professional development there as well. But there's

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a lot more to that and I've seen some of these behaviors when I visited some of the school districts and I feel kind of bad sometimes for these teachers that have to deal with these behaviors. But we also have to find a way to have more resources for our local systems 'cause many of them are asking for more social workers, for more guidance counselors so there is a need. And I think that social workers can go into the homes, talk with the parents, look at what our triggers that set some of these children off because sometimes it can be something really simple that sets them off or it could be that they're dealing with something -- their environment at home or it could be something else that's triggering them. They could be bullied and they're not sharing that. I mean there's so many things that we need to look into. So with that, do we have any questions? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): I just would like to make a comment and thank you for coming forward and giving us more suggestion. You know we've been talking about this for the last couple of years and we -- we all I think understand that there's a lot that needs to be done and if Oregon has a model out there and can talk about resources and how we can bring in businesses and partnership and I think it's worthwhile to look at. I think the goal, we all have the same goal; we just have to really pull all of the different parties together. I'm glad you mentioned the social/emotional learning collaborative because I think they're going to come out with some good recommendations as well. We've talked to many different persons throughout as we're trying to solve these problems and we know we don't

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want to place the burden on the teachers. We want to find the solution that works for everyone keeping the child as our focus, but finding the ways that we can all come to the same end result. So I -- in a long way of saying thank you for offering the Oregon model and I'll look at it.

RAY ROSSOMANDO: May I follow up for a moment? I just want to also point out that obviously what we're seeing is an increase in children who are showing up to school with adverse childhood experiences or traumas and that is something that we need more training -- our teachers want more training on that, but that is not sufficient. We're also recognizing that we're going things in the schools that are exacerbating that problem. As Kate Field mentioned earlier, we're pushing rigorous curriculum down lower and lower into the early grades. We're taking away things like play that really encourage collaboration and emotional -- social/emotional regulation. And so we have to also kind of recognize what we are going in schools that make this problem even worse and we have control over that. And we can actually do -- make some changes without spending money, just in addressing how we help students cope and how they understand how to build executive functioning and communication skills and build a language for dealing with their social/emotional challenges. So that's also a piece of this as well.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And I get it 'cause you know we have to look at the curriculums. We have to look at how we you know plan for our daily activities in school. I mean as a preschool teacher in the past I did a lot through play. I -- I had many children in my classroom that were behavior issues. I mean they

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-- they were you know diagnosed with ADHD or whatever it may be. And so I knew that walking into the classroom, the children were not going to sit down at circle time and listen to an activity or do an activity, not right away. It just wasn't going to happen 'cause many of them were just climbing the walls. So what did I do? I had to change the way I planned for that day and for that week. And so what I did mostly with the support of my director at that time was that we went outside. We went outside and I took the curriculum with me.

You know we'd walk up to the park, we'd talk about the shapes of the leaves, the shapes of the trees, shapes of cars. We talked about the bricks. We'd talk about colors. We counted things. Kids are learning while they're doing that, and I think we've taken a lot of creativity out of our schools and -- and many of these kids learn by hands-on experiences and we -- we've taken that away from them. So you're absolutely correct. And last year I know we talked about expanding recess time from 20 minutes what they get now to 50 minutes. We didn't get -- we didn't get anywhere with that but I think -- I absolutely agree that recess should be a little longer as well. But I -- I thank you again for your testimony and we'll -- we definitely will be looking at your written testimony and the information you sent us. Thank you. I have Amy Farrio. I'm sorry if I killed your last name.

JAMIE HAWKING FERRON: Actually Amy is not able to be here so I am going to take her place today.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And your name?

JAMIE HAWKING FERRON: Jamie Hawking Ferron. Good afternoon. My name is Jamie Hawking Ferron and I've

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been a teacher in Wallingford for the past 17 years. While the proposal concerning -- providing SEL programs to educators important it is not enough to address the severity of the current condition in our classrooms. What is truly necessary is a comprehensive approach to addressing student trauma and promote social/emotional learning standards in to the grade 3 through 12 curriculum and create model social/emotional learning units to help districts integrate strategies into their entire curriculum at a low cost.

As a district literacy coach I work with about 500 students in grades 3, 4 and 5. Over the past 5 years my colleagues and I have seen dramatic increases in the number of student outbursts that require intervention from outside staff, from outside of the classroom. Last year I was co-teaching a class on narrative writing when one -- when one student heard the word writing, his behavior immediately escalated. He threw his books off his desk and started to scream. His teacher and paraprofessional followed their protocol but the child had to be removed from the classroom. It took three adults 45 minutes to calm him down enough for him to be returned to the classroom.

If we begin kindergarten with a model of social/emotional learning curriculum and then incorporate social/emotional learning standards into grades 3 through 12 perhaps we can give our students the necessary tools to regulate their emotions so that their learning and the learning of others is not impacted. As teachers, we often do not know what triggers these outbursts but we do need more resources to help us handle what is increasingly becoming an everyday occurrence.

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In conclusion I am pleased that we are moving forward in integrating social/emotional learning in programs of professional development for our teachers, but we need so much more. Please consider the addition of a model social/emotional learning curriculum and social/emotional learning standards in grades 3 to 12 to this Bill. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions from -- Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much for your testimony and your description of some of the situations you've been faced with in your school. I am wondering two things. One is what impact does that have on the rest of the students that may not have those issues? And two, was there a diagnoses and treatment that occurred after an outburst like that?

JAMIE HAWKING-FERRON: It depends. I mean these things are occurring with a lot of frequency. Sometimes depending on what the protocol is, it could be that the child is removed from the classroom. Sometimes it's that the classroom is removed and the child stays. So it really depends on each individual situation. So sometimes yes, classrooms are evacuated, the child stays. For this particular student it's that he's evacuated and the rest of the classroom stays. In the beginning of the year if it's a new group of students and they don't know this child and his behaviors it can be very alarming. This particular student, his outbursts were known to the student so they kind of at this point in the year were comfortable with it.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): So you don't think it interferes with their learning?

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JAMIE HAWKING-FERRON: It does interfere with their learning yeah, absolutely.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): To what degree?

JAMIE HAWKING-FERRON: They're off task. They stop what they're doing and they look to see what's going on. There's a disruption when other adults have to enter the classroom, especially if they have to be moved to an entirely different classroom, learning stops.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Is that a good way to operate our schools?

JAMIE HAWKING-FERRON: No.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): And how would we solve the -- how would we solve that? How do we do that? Do we -- is there a degree of disability that doesn't belong in the classroom?

JAMIE HAWKING-FERRON: Well in this particular case this child did have a diagnoses. He was a special ed student. There aren't enough special ed teachers to be able to come and help with the students that we have. I mean that's a whole other situation that we can be talking about. I think there are situations where students shouldn't be in classrooms but we do need -- you know we do owe our students the most appropriate education, so.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): I think it's the least restrictive.

JAMIE HAWKING-FERRON: It is the least restrictive, yes. [Laughing]

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REP. JOHNSON (49TH): That's the language. Anyway, thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chair, I appreciate it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. I have a group of students in the audience. Would you come up? If you want you can grab some of the seats over here. So before you speak, make sure you say your name, state your name and what school you're from. Thank you.

ANNA GRAD: So good afternoon, my name is Anna Grad. I'm from Seymour but I'm a senior at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury and we're all here to speak on behalf of Bill No. 310 and why Agra Science needs increased funding equal to that of other choice school options. So right now I'm enrolled greenhouse plant production and my kind of goals so far are to go to just a college, don't have all my decisions back yet, and study public health in the hopes of ending food insecurity in Connecticut. So without my high school experience I would have had no idea about agriculture. Seymour isn't really a super agricultural town, especially at first glance, so I was able to connect with industry professionals. I've had to an agriculturally related job for all four years of high school. And I've been able to compete on teams involving livestock judging, which is something I never dreamed of doing. But overall the agricultural opportunity is not just for leadership but for also building real connections within the industry, especially all around the county and even around the state has really been invaluable to me, so that's kind of what agricultural education has done for me.

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JULIA GRYWACZ: Hi, my name is Julia Grywacz and I'm also from Nonnewaug High School and I'm also from Seymour as well. I am a junior currently and my focus in my school's Agra Science program is natural resources, conservation and after high school I plan on attending college to study wildlife biology in hopes of becoming a wildlife biologist. The Ag program has personally helped me a lot. When I first came into high school I was so scared to talk. I was really shy and I never really did anything out of my comfort zone, but now that I'm here, my teachers have really pushed me to be the best that I can be and I've learned to speak up and I've competed in a bunch of different events at school. I did milk quality, environmental science and even a public speaking contest which would really be pushing it for middle school me but I've learned a lot, and it's really helped me grow. Everyone who goes in a program gets really unique experiences. Every freshman gets their tractor driving license you learn to do such cool things. And this year in my Ag class I'm learning to make and produce maple syrup which is something I would have never been able to do where I'm from. But this program overall is amazing and I really enjoy it. Thank you.

JULIA NIELSON: Hi, my name is Julia Nielson. I'm from Southbury and I'm currently a junior at Nonnewaug High School and I'm taking the greenhouse production and horticulture class. I can't even explain how much this Ag program has impacted me. Along with learning about agricultural skills I've learned to have public speaking events and learned how to prepare myself for events such as this and personally speak among other people without sounding like a complete fool. And I've also been able to be

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given some many opportunities that has greatly expanded my knowledge in agriculture, especially in greenhouse. It has helped me land a job in a florist and a garden and I have -- without this school I would not have known any of the things that I know now about greenhouse production and it has -- I can't explain how much it has impacted me greatly because it has completely changed my career path from wanting to do something in medicine, to wanting to go into greenhouse production and that's hopefully what I can do after high school along with the Agricultural program I've been given opportunity such as possible internships after school. And competitions this past fall we were able to go to Indianapolis and I was able to compete for floriculture, and without this program I would not have been able to do any of that. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): If you're sitting in front of a mic over there you can actually use one of those mics next to you.

CLAIRE DEMERS: Hello, I am Claire Demers. I am from Watertown and I am a senior at Nonnewaug High School. My Agra Science focus is aquiculture and I plan on majoring in aquaculture in college looking to accomplish my career goal of becoming an Agra Science teacher. I hope to have the opportunity to teach students about such a unique field as Agra Science. The Agra Science program has give me a variety of opportunities inside and outside of the classroom. I've had countless opportunities to sharpen my leadership skills while gaining knowledge of the aquiculture industry within the classroom as well. With more funding Agra Science programs in our state would be much better able to equip the next generation of not just farmers, but also

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botanists, mechanics, conservationists, biotechnologists, veterinarians and of course aquaculturists, but of course many more. Thank you.

KATRINA HENDEL: My name is Katrina Hendel and I'm from Coventry. As of right now I'm a sophomore at EO Smith and I experienced not -- at first I was unable to go to EO Smith due to the funding but I just made it in actually like a day before school started. But the agricultural program has taught me so much already and technically I am in there going through a freshman's education since it is my first year as a sophomore in the school -- in the program. And I have gained -- I've gained so many friends and so much knowledge from it, it has opened me up into so many things that I was reluctant to get into it, just being how I am. But if I ever wanted to, I have so many things I am available to and I get taught so many valuable things that I could use whatever I choose to go into after high school. And I wish for more people with towns that have strict funding limits to have that opportunity 'cause I know in Coventry in the school system, it's not taught really at all. There's basic science but there is no special agricultural program or anything like that at all. Thank you.

GABRIELLA KING: Hello, my name is Gabriella King. I'm from Windon, Connecticut and I also go to EO Smith and I'll just start off by saying that I did not at first really have a lot of ambition to go to an agricultural school. It was more something that my parents introduced to me and I was 50/50 on the idea. But I'm really thankful for being part of the agricultural education program now that I am in. Not only have I learned life skills, skills like trade skills as well. But like you were saying

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before, education is losing the sense of creativity that it once had and by being part of an agriculture program you are not having the strict curriculum that you have to follow these certain rules. You're able to expand and learn things that you don't have a chance to do through other programs. We can use more hands-on approaches to learning, which I believe through just the interactions with myself and with my classmates as well, is the best way to teach because you're not given this amount of work that you have to study, you're able to use hands-on approaches and skills that you never really thought you had the chance to do in education when it comes to your standard math, English or science classrooms.

And like I said before and some of the other girls touched upon, you learn life skills as well, such as how to talk, how to be a leader in the classroom. And I know one of the other students in my classroom as well as myself have taken these approaches and these skills that we've learned into our life other than just school, into our communities by joining the fire departments actually in our towns. So that's just one example, something that you learn in school that you can expand on and help not only just your school but your town as well. Thank you.

BRIANNA KING: My name is Brianna King and Gabriella and I are actually officers of our chapter and we came here to support our fellow FA members and that's really what Ag is all about, it's about supporting each other, it's leadership skills, it's as we mentioned being more hands on. And to further that I actually have a job now that uses sales pitches toward -- this is what I learned in Ag and all these different leadership skills. It builds my

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confidence. It helps in real world situations. It helps me get further education and get jobs and it's really important to all of us. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Any others? So now I get the pleasure of bringing up Ed Bolinsky, I guess he's the teacher.

ED BOLINSKY: One, maybe half of them. We're not an all-girls school, okay? [Laughing] This happened by accident. We should have planned better when we chose --

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): That was going to be one of my questions [laughing], but you answered that, okay.

ED BOLINSKY: Thank you very much for having us. My name is Ed Bolinsky. I wear a lot of different hats in agricultural sciences. I am -- I'm a former student. I have two degrees in agriculture. I'm a certified forester, certified soil scientist, agricultural teacher and now the director of the Woodbury -- Woodbury FFA. This Bill that we're here reviewing today, Bill No. 310, this Bill is a great step forward in agricultural education. I think we all appreciate it, all 20 centers across the state, this sentiment and what we're trying to do here in trying to equalize funding for Agra Science which is the less known choice school in addition to the magnus, charters and the technical high schools.

I believe that we're working towards a solution, however, we need the increased funding if we want to make these programs grow into the future and bring up the quality of students that we're bringing out, that we're obviously bringing out. The way this Bill is written, I think we're not there yet. Ultimately I think it actually hurts our programs

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the way it's written with the deletion of the special education requirements and the reimbursement That goes back to the host towns. But I'm not -- I'm very optimistic. I think this Committee right here supports agricultural science more than anything else. I know a lot of familiar faces around this table and I think that we're moving forward towards a better goal and I'm really looking forward to moving forward and getting a Bill that really supports the funding equality. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): I want to thank you for your testimony and the students. But don't leave yet, 'cause we're going to have some questions.

[Laughing] Well I'm sure Representative Cook will have probably questions for everyone. [Laughing] Representative Cook.

REP. COOK (65TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hi ladies, how are you? Nice to see you. I'm sorry I missed part of your public testimony; we were on a conference all. I just want to say first and foremost to any of -- anybody watching that our men and women in blue jackets are some of the most impressive students that I've ever come to meet and work with over the last 12 years in this building. So as you all sit here and represent your school and your program quite well, beyond quite well, please know that it does not fall on deaf ears that the equality in funding needs to improve. It's something that I've put in since I walked in this building.

I also heard you say that you thought this piece of legislation specifically had some things that needed to be done. I wanted to assure you that I have a Bill in Appropriations to equalize the funding as

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well. So regardless of what happens here, there is also another avenue in the Appropriations Committee to try to do exactly that. Because I think that there should be no disparity in funding and you all, sine we are a state of school choice, you all should have the opportunity to go and districts who feel the burden of possibly losing students due to enrollment decline and what have you, that we need to be able to take that burden off of them to ensure that you all can share your experiences with other people that you have. And I want to say to you, keep up the great work and I hope to see some of you sitting on this side of the desk someday. And thank you for your new position and all the great work that you do.

ED BOLINSKY: Thank you, Representative Cook.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I too would like to welcome you and thank you for your excellent approach in speaking to us today. It was excellent. But I have a question for your teacher. Can you just tell me in the school in the Agra Science schools, do you have school to career coordinators because the girls all mentioned different careers and they all seem to already have a perspective of where they were going to go and what they were going to do; so I'm just curious as to whether you have a school to career coordinator.

ED BOLINSKY: I think that the Agra Science curriculum is one of the best in the country. Yes, we do include that. In addition to the curriculum that we teach during school, all students are required to join the FFA, which is the largest youth

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organization in the country, the blue jackets, and that's where we start teaching more of the leadership skills and interacting with local government and trying to do voluntarism, everything like that. And then also requirement as part of the law that represents Agra Science they have to get an SAC, which is a called a Supervised Agricultural Experience where they have to get a job, they have to work in the field of agriculture and in our school they have to work 200 throughout the year at that job.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you all for your great presentations today. I really was very impressed with all the work that you're doing and I just think that this is a wonderful program and there's going to be so many different levels of things that you can do in agriculture. My cousin is an agricultural economist and she's been working with different places all throughout the country you know, learning all about different foods and evaluating the value of the food and all of that sort of thing. So I think that's probably something that may be also included with what you're doing in agriculture; is that part of what you do?

ED BOLINSKY: Yes.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Very, very good. So that's -- that's very, very impressive. The other thing is, I just wanted to know, what is your connection with the University of Connecticut since it's an agricultural school and I just wondered how they're related, if they're working with you as well?

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ED BOLINSKY: Yes, so it's part of the FFA we also have a career judging teams that we go through and try to link the actual career to the student so they can understand what they're -- what they're up against if that's their interest. UConn hosts both of our spring and fall field days we call it where they design -- they design contests based on different career choices and students, mostly that were Agra Science students in the past that are now at UConn; I went to UConn. I did it when I was there. And then we actually designed it for the kids, so they actually get to go see UConn at least twice a year.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Wonderful. Well thank you all so much for being here and talking to us. I'll be working Representative Cook on that Bill to make sure you have equalized funding. Thank you so much.

ED BOLINSKY: Very much appreciate it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative Johnson. And now I want to have Senator Berthel who introduced this Bill in the Senate make some remarks and probably ask some questions. [Laughing]

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually you know I don't know that I have questions. I met with four of the young ladies that are sitting before us that all happen to either live or attend school in my Senate District and I know Representative Johnson, one of you is from Windon which is the Representative's good hometown. But Mr. Bolinsky, thank you for your effort in bringing these -- these fine students before us today. I share your sentiments as a Ranking Member of this Committee that the Bill, the Bill before us at the moment does not necessarily do everything we would

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like it to do and it actually has a couple of detractors if you will, that make it a little less palatable. And I will work with my colleagues on the Committee, if it's not this year then -- I know we say this often that, oh there's always next year, there's always next year. Well you know there kind of is always next year and sometimes it takes -- it takes years to get things done in this building.

But I don't know that there's a single person that sits on the legislature today that -- that doesn't understand that we have to bring some equality to funding not only for our Ag Science programs but kind of across the state with a lot of the unique educational opportunities that we offer to students in Connecticut. One of the things that arguably makes Connecticut one of the best places to go and attend your high school years, 'cause we have such great options and -- and we need to continue to support that.

You know there's this -- this misconception that if you're in the -- Agra -- Ag Science program that you're a farmer and you're out in the field with you know, scraping manure off your boots at the end of the day and just to listen to what all of you spoke to, and I know there's at least a couple of seniors in the -- in the room that are getting ready to graduate in a few months; your confidence here today, your ability to speak before a Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly and its legislative body and to do so eloquently and talk about the -- the excellence that -- the excellence and the education you've received not only agricultural sciences at Nonnewaug and at EO Smith, right, EO Smith but just the other things that are -- that are components of your education are really -- it's

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really feel good. I mean it's wonderful that we are preparing as high school juniors and seniors for the next step in your career.

And then you know, I've had the -- the pleasure to attend the FFA graduation dinner, the award's ceremony that occurs later this year, I think it's in May, right.

ED BOLINSKY: May, yes.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): And the first time I went there I left and my head was kind of spinning because I was looking at going into that and saying, we have the next generation of farmers, we really do. And we have a lot of farms out in my neck of woods. Representative Johnson has a lot of farms out where she is. Representative Cook you have a little less farms, but you have farms too up in -- up in your neck.

ED BOLINSKY: The biggest is in the ocean in Connecticut.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): What's that?

ED BOLINSKY: The biggest farms in Connecticut are in the ocean.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): That's right, in the aquiculture and I know Claire, and in the interest of full disclosure I've known Claire's parents for a lot of years. I've known of her since she was just a little kid, but my point in that is, you leave the FFA dinner at the end of the school year and you hear about these seniors going to great schools across the country and they're not going to become necessarily a farmer, although some of them do. But they're leaving to go on and become scientists and

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biologists and veterinarians and these really specialized and unique career paths that quite honestly some of them, I didn't even know existed and I'm an educator myself at heart and by training.

But I think it just leads more credence to the notion that we need to continue to support Ag Science programs in Connecticut. The Nonnewaug program, yeah you know, go Chiefs, Nonnewaug Chiefs; it is in -- literally on the border of my hometown but is arguably one of the best programs in the nation. It's award winning and does amazing things each year. So I could probably go on for another hour. I won't because it's been a long day, but thank you ladies for being up here. Mr. Bolinsky, thank you. And I know there's a couple other educators and leaders behind you perhaps if you just want to give a wave and say hello. Thank you as well for being here. We'll see if we can maybe twist this Bill a little bit and make it a little more palatable. But I assure you that for those of us that come back, hopefully that's all of us, if we're trying to come back after November; we will give this our -- our complete attention again and see what we can do to make sure that we are properly and equitably funding Ag Science programs in Connecticut. So thanks again, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the indulgence of a little extra time.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Is Matthew Agnello part of your -- he can come up too.

MATTHEW AGNELLO: Well thank you for having us and I guess I'm not going to read my testimony. We appreciate all of your support for the agriculture education programs in our state. And it was good to hear how much support that you guys have for us and

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we greatly appreciate it. And I just want to kind of echo what Ed said in that you know, this Bill is good but it's not quite where we need it to be. So that's pretty much it. I don't want to keep on going on, so thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, thank you all for your testimonies. Kristen Record.

KRISTEN RECORD: Good evening. Good evening Representative Sanchez, and Representative and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Kristen Record. I am a resident of Bridgeport and have taught physics at Bunnell High School in Stratford for the past 20 years. I am the Stratford Education Association Vice President for Secondary Schools and Connecticut's 2011 Teacher of the Year. I'm here to discussed Raised Bill 5378.

I am an advocate for the integration of social emotional learning (SEL) at all grade levels. I also firmly believe that SEL should be integrated directly into academic learning. In fact, last year I participated in a research project run by the Center for Curriculum Redesign about how teachers can teach SEL competencies in the context of content Instruction. So for example, how one might overtly teach resilience or problem solving or empathy in the context of physics, math, or music curriculum. Thus, I am very supportive of efforts to provide educators with high quality SEL professional development. However, as a classroom teacher, I know that we need to approach the SEL needs of students far more comprehensively than simply through an hour of professional learning.

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In developing a plan to systematically address the social emotional needs of the whole child, a district must consider a variety of questions and concerns. Placing professional learning up front, before a district has a chance to create an implementation plan, risks compromising our efforts before we even start. So many children in our public schools are in crisis from factors far beyond the control of educators, and so much more is needed to support these students than an hour of professional learning. In a survey conducted last year by Education Week, 43 percent of teachers said they had difficulty finding ways to help students who appear to be struggling with problems outside of school. As a high school teacher, I can say this is so very real to me. In the fall, when CEA, AFT, and WFSB Channel 3 joined forces to survey Connecticut teachers on a variety of topics, this same struggle was highlighted. When the question was posed, do you feel equipped to deal with your student's mental health challenges, almost 90 percent of Connecticut teachers said, no. In that same Ed Week survey, 46 percent of teachers stated they somewhat or completely disagreed their schools had adequate support services from those individuals. This is also something I face on a weekly basis in my school and it is the reason I strongly believe that ratios for social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors in Connecticut's schools should meet national standards. In fact, speaking as the chairperson for contract negotiations for my local association we have tried to negotiate for these ratios to be written into our contract for the past nine years, to no avail.

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Addressing the needs of our most at-risk children will take a comprehensive and holistic response that goes far beyond professional learning. I thank you for raising this important issue for discussion and urge you to consider bolder actions, such as those proposed in CEA's Safe and Compassionate Learning Initiative, that was discussed by Kate Field. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any comments, questions? Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. How far off are you in your district with respect to having met the national standards?

KRISTEN RECORD: We're pretty close with school counselors but we're pretty off with social workers and psychologists.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): And the reason for that is?

KRISTEN RECORD: Just not adequate funds for staffing in our schools. We do have about the correct ratio for school counselors but what my students experience is that they often use their school counselors for college counseling and career counseling, not for the other types of counseling that they perhaps need. And then access to the social worker or psychologist is often limited because those professionals are dealing with students that are IEP'd to them for service hours and so while on paper I think in some schools it may seem like ratios are correct when you take into account the special ed component of the IEP hours to service professionals, you end up with a proportion of regular education students that are not able to access these professionals.

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REP. JOHNSON (49TH): So I am wondering -- it almost sounds like we haven't made the adjustment in terms of the numbers of students that we have that have special needs since the PJ Case in the 90s.

KRISTEN RECORD: I would agree with that.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Okay very good. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, thank you for your testimony.

KRISTEN RECORD: Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Carrie Cassidy.

CARRIE CASSIDY: Good Afternoon Chairs and members of the Committee. My name is Carrie Cassidy and I teach 6th grade science in Torrington. I am testifying on HB 5378 which takes important steps in highlighting current problems with social and emotional learning, but there is much that it fails to address. I am in my 20th year of teaching middle school. In this time, I have seen a dramatic change in student behavior. When I began teaching, disruptive students were a rarity. Today, disruptive, aggressive, and sometimes violent behavior is common. It is a daily occurrence. I teach five classes a day and every single one of my classes is interrupted by disruptive. My students don't even react to the disruptions because it is so pervasive that it has become normal. This is not normal. It should never be normal.

I feel the problem begins with our youngest students. We have four year olds starting kindergarten. Four year olds who are expected to sit and maintain focus during rigorous lessons. Four

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year olds who are expected to learn to read before many are ready. These four year old become frustrated because they do not have the ability to do what is being asked of them. They begin to feel stress and anxiety. This stress and anxiety causes them to act in ways that are disruptive to their learning and to learning of the entire class. They are running out of the classroom, out of building and into busy streets. They are not ready for the academic expectations currently in place. There is too much that they are expected to learn as the students themselves become younger.

You are probably wondering why a middle school teacher would focus on kindergarten students. These kindergarten students become sixth graders in my classroom. My sixth graders also exhibit disruptive behaviors. My students are screaming, swearing at me, throwing objects in the hallways and classrooms, and walking out of classrooms. They are frustrated and stressed because they didn't learn coping skills when they began school. These skills were not taught because there is no time allocated for these skills.

Please support CEA's proposed initiative. Our students deserve the opportunity to be educated in an environment that is free from disruptive, and aggressive behavior.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, thank you for your testimony. I just want to ask a -- and I don't want to put you on the spot either. [Laughing] With the administration, do you feel you get support from the school administrators?

CARRIE CASSIDY: It depends. It depends on the student in question. It depends on the teacher who

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is requesting assistance from the administration. It depends on the behavior. If it's something that administration feels should be easily addressed in the classroom it is frequently ignored. If it is egregious and someone is available and not dealing with behaviors somewhere else in the building someone will come to offer assistance.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Representative Cook.

REP. COOK (65TH): Hi Carrie. Thanks for being here. I'm glad you made it after school.

CARRIE CASSIDY: Thank you.

REP. COOK (65TH): As you -- you tapped onto something that I think that we struggle with in this building and it's about the age students going to school. And whether or not we're not -- you know we're talking about legislating the change of kindergarten and what have you. You referenced that a few times on the fact that we might be pushing children into a position that they're just not adequately prepared for maturely ready for.

CARRIE CASSIDY: That is correct.

REP. COOK (65TH): So once you see that, once you see that in the kindergarten, and I know you're in the middle school, but once we see that are you -- are you saying that because we are starting that process and we haven't rectified the situations going up and we had a meeting last year in full disclosure at our -- in Torrington and there were about 40 or 50 teachers there feeling very frustrated about the safety of their school, about the lack of ability to maybe necessarily discipline or follow up with discipline, not because they don't

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want to as educators but because they feel that their hands are tied. About misrepresentation of some of the directives that we have had sent down from SDE or the interpretations of those directions. If you were to say that sitting here right now we could solve some of that problem, what does that look like for you and I know that that's large.

CARRIE CASSIDY: It is. I think if students had to be older when they started kindergarten they would have the -- things would be more developmentally appropriate for them. Right now we have babies starting school and they are expected to learn things that I learned when I was in first grade not as a kindergartner. I think if we have social and emotional learning starting with the kindergartners and having the kindergartners more age appropriate it would help them adjust to school, it would help them learn to follow expectations. They would learn how to treat others and then if they're able to have their basic needs met as they start school then I would hope that as they continue throughout their education career that the disruptive behaviors would decrease because they know what's expected of them and things are more age appropriate. I don't know if that really answered the question.

REP. COOK (65TH): So you would say that the one thing that you would do to possibly move on some of these other changes would be to change the age?

CARRIE CASSIDY: Yes, one of the things I would like to see.

REP. COOK (65TH): And do you believe that 5 years old is appropriate or do you believe that 6 years old would be the appropriate? And I know that that's kind of open-ended; or would you put a --

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would you put a date of hypothetically August 15 'cause most schools start subsequently there or thereafter and say that if you are five by that date you go and if you're not you don't.

CARRIE CASSIDY: Yes, I would.

REP. COOK (65TH): And do you believe that the schools or the preschools in those surrounding situations would be adequately -- and you may not be able to have that answer, but you know Torrington pretty well; would they be able to handle that?

CARRIE CASSIDY: I know we have expanded our Pre-K program. We would need to expand it further if the starting age of kindergarten were pushed back to the age of five, but I think that is probably something that could hopefully be addressed by the state and help open up more universal quality Pre-K classes.

REP. COOK (65TH): Which I know most schools have the -- most schools or most districts have enough space in their districts in some way, shape or form to be able to do that. And is there anything else besides that that you would look at altering.

CARRIE CASSIDY: Wow, that's a big question. I would like a focus on the social and emotional learning. Not just for our younger students but coming into middle school is whole other transition so it's something that should be across the continuum of their educational career because there are so many aspects to it. My students are also disruptive. They don't always have the social skills that they need and I frequently do not have the time to address those social skills because I have a science curriculum that is actually longer than the school year, so it's a challenge to meet my

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curriculum as well as trying to address some of the social needs of my students.

REP. COOK (65TH): And do you feel that your district or that the state offers enough? You know I know we altered the way we did CEUs and stuff like that, but do you feel that you get enough retraining or reeducation as you go through your educational career, that that would help you with some of these situations? Do you feel that that type of a conversation is kind of left off and maybe that's something else Mr. Chair, we can look at; is by requiring certain things through your training days to offer.

CARRIE CASSIDY: I think that would be a good start but I'm not sure that just using professional development days is enough time to fully incorporate this into our schools. I think it's a much larger scope than just professional development. I'm not really sure how to implement it except making it part of the curriculum. It would certainly help teachers if we had professional development opportunities in addition to having it as part of the curriculum.

REP. COOK (65TH): Thank you. And thank you for everything that you do.

CARRIE CASSIDY: Thank you, Michelle.

REP. COOK (65TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Representative Napoli.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here today and you taught your classes today? Did you teach today?

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CARRIE CASSIDY: I did teach today.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): And you came and waited here to testify so we thank you for that. In your opinion, when an unruly student has to be removed from a classroom environment, what normally happens? How - - what's a timeframe on when they are returned to the classroom?

CARRIE CASSIDY: Again, it also depends on the student, the teacher requesting assistance and the behavior. It can be anywhere from just a few moments outside the classroom door to the entire day, depending on the student's response to requests from administration or other people who come to assist.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): And do you think they're returning with interventions or some kind of improved practice, some kind of mentoring component?

CARRIE CASSIDY: If they have been moved away from the classroom and there's been time for them to process and discuss what happened and possible solutions and changes in behavior to avoid it being repeated, yes. But if they're just outside the classroom for a minute or two and then come back in, then absolutely not.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Thank you very much, I appreciate that.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

CARRIE CASSIDY: Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Lisa Thomas. Good evening.

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LISA THOMAS: Good evening, good evening members of the Education Committee. Thank you for your time tonight. My name is Lisa Thomas. This is my 35th year of teaching in Connecticut public schools. For the past 15 years I have taught in the Windsor School District so I would like to leave my thanks to Senator McCrory and Representative Gibson for serving on this Committee. You have my written testimony so I'm just going to highlight a little bit of it. It's imperative that HB 5378 do more to address the trauma that so many of our students carry to school with them. I have never seen the level of trauma and anger in so many students as I have experienced in the last three years. Our children are hurting.

Schools must have detailed plans for helping these students and they must be held accountable to implementing them with fidelity. There need to be limits on special education caseloads. My special education colleagues are struggling to meet the needs of caseloads that are so large they render IEPs meaningless, and of course that's also illegal. And we must ensure that the ratios of social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors meet national standards. How are we to help our children when we do not have enough staff who are trained to evaluate and support students with complex needs? And we must put far more of these resources at the K-5 level where we can help kids develop coping skills and learn to manage their emotional needs before they move on to the increased social and academic pressures of middle school and high school. None of us go into teaching for any kind of glory, you know that. We are in it because we believe in nurturing the future. But we can't do

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that when we fear for our safety and the safety of our students when we have to evacuate classrooms to keep students safe from one another. Please try to imagine the impact that such environments have on learning, and I know that's what Representative Johnson was trying to ask about. What child wants to come to school when they fear for their safety, when they wonder if their classroom will have to evacuate because a classmate is violent. When they freeze each time a privacy team call comes across the loudspeaker. This is not what Connecticut should settle for. Our values call for so much more.

I know many of you on this Committee and I know how deeply you care about our children and our families. Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony. Please invest in our children.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much for your testimony and your work as an educator. And I just wanted to know, are you familiar with other districts and perhaps what other states are doing 'cause I think that we're -- we're caught in what we're doing here and I'm concerned that evacuating a whole classroom because of behavioral health difficulties, are these things that are just from my perspective and from when I was in school I mean that would have never happened. And I know we've had some changes in the law because of the PJ Case and the -- and what we're doing is moving our -- our mainstreaming our students with disabilities into the classroom. But at what point do we stop doing that and you know, in terms of the -- the difficulty

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with respect to what the child is experiencing and what are the alternatives for those. And that's a lot of questions, but what might the alternatives be? Thank You.

LISA THOMAS: Well to be honest not all of our students who are coming to school with trauma are even identified as special need students. These are kids who don't necessarily have a diagnosis or 504 or IEP. These are students who have witnessed things, who are living in challenging conditions. We have students who are living in homeless shelters. When they come to school they're bringing a lot of extra baggage with them. Things that small children shouldn't have to be managing. So it's -- it's not even necessarily just a special education issue. It's -- it's a human issue. And we need to be able to provide therapeutic settings for these children or additional counseling and support in our school buildings.

Listen, I'm watching students who otherwise would be doing perfectly fine in our classrooms following the lead of other children who are disruptive and violent because it's a lot easier to be that kid than to be the kid who is doing what you're supposed to be doing. And I'm in a third, fourth, fifth grade building. It's -- it's -- it's really upsetting and I'm not going to say the words, but the things that we are called by small, third and fourth graders on a daily basis, you would be astonished. And I know you and I have spoken about this. And they're not doing it because they want to be mean, they're doing it because they don't know what else to do.

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REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much for being here and sharing your stories with us, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I know listening today to all the testimony I think it's clear that we need to create support systems that protect the child but also are cognizant of what the teachers are experiencing in the classroom and I think that's the goal for this. But we're looking at it from a couple of different angles. We're going to try to go back, look at the comprehensive plan that's been introduced and see if we can't find a way. Because as you're pointing out clearly, one in four children coming to school in trauma, there are other needs there. We have to really look at what kind of support systems we can put in place that can help the teachers.

This is the problem. We taught -- we don't want to say it but resources are an issue and until we have, we don't want exclusionary practices, we want to be able to help the child that's experiencing whatever the behavior is in the classroom so it's a very big issue that we're facing. But I think we're all very cognizant of it here and we want to create those kind of systems that work for both the child and for the teacher. So that's our charge and it really does help to have someone in the profession for 35 years giving us your take on how you're seeing a changing dynamic in the classroom over many years. So it's incumbent upon us to find those solutions. I'm a strong advocate of the social/emotional learning all the way, K through 12. I think it's a beginning to help us but we have to have those

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supports in place. Someone -- one of the previous testifies mentioned that the social/emotional learning is important but unless we find a way to help with the support system it's -- it's a help but it's not going to solve the entire problem.

LISA THOMAS: And I would encourage some out-of-the box thinking as well. I serve in the municipal office and we are in the middle of budget as well. And one of the things that I'm going to suggest is we meet with our Board of Education and how can we think out of the box. How can towns partner with their Boards of Education to bring in some of this support because it isn't just in our schools, it's our families. We have families that need support as well, and how do we partner amongst our various boards, commissions, selectmen, boards of finance. You know we have 169 different ways of doing things. How do we do that so that it's in the best interest of our children and our families?

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you -- any other questions? Thank you for your testimony.

LISA THOMAS: Thank you for your time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay. We have two more educators from Windsor. Would you guys like to come together? We have Lynne Devito and Stacey Paley. Well you know, one at a time, clearly. [Laughing]

LYNNE DEVITO: Good afternoon. My name is Lynne DeVito. This is my 23rd year working in education. For the past seven years I've been a special education teacher at John F. Kennedy Elementary School in Windsor. I'm also a resident. My whole family is in public service.

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Our students are screaming out for help. They are suffering. Thank you for considering this Bill. It is certainly a step in the right direction, however, I feel that a boots-on-the-ground-approach is what's really needed. Professional development and more meetings will not facilitate what is needed to support our students. When I was in grade school I never experienced, as I do now, rooms being evacuated or any type of violence. I never feared being hit by another student. I can't imagine what it's like for my students today in the classrooms. Today at my school this experience happens daily. For some of our students school is supposed to be the safest place that they experience, or supposed to be.

My day begins by clipping a walkie-talkie to my pants. Every single time it goes off the members of the pupil services team at JFK jumps due to anxiety, stress and staff trauma. As part of my school's privacy team, I see students screaming for help daily. Every day at my school, students and staff are hurt because of aggressive behavior. The situation is so extreme that my colleague who trains our district employees in PMT procedures was injured this year. Of the four special education teachers in my building, three of us have been physically hurt this year. It is without question that we need to do more to support all of our students with trauma or who are in crisis. Schools need alternative programming that supports these students and their families. We need partnerships with community-based social services. Schools must meet criteria for the numbers of social workers, psychologists, and counselors. As a special

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education teachers need smaller caseloads in order to do our jobs with fidelity. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Stay there, please. No, no, no, just stay to the side 'cause someone might have a question after your teammate.

STACEY PALEY: My name is Stacey and I'm in my 22nd year of teaching in Windsor Public Schools. I am tapping my pencil like this so that you can experience one small thing my students have experienced this year. Imagine that you are trying to learn how to add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators and put the answers in lowest terms. Meanwhile another student is loudly tapping his pencil or water bottle or hand on the table. Your teacher has asked him to stop multiple times. You and other students have asked him to stop multiple times. He just says, "Make me." Your teacher has called for assistance, but since he is not harming himself or another student, she is told to ignore it. Later that day the same student is now opening and slamming the door to the classroom. Again, he is not hurting himself or another student so everyone must ignore it

This is how my students have spent many days this school year. They have also had to endure a student calling me names on a daily basis and swearing at me. My students hear other students screaming, yelling, and numerous privacy team calls throughout the school day. I have witnessed colleagues getting hit, kicked, bit, yelled at, and following students who have eloped. My building has had several teachers out for multiple days due to injuries by students. Several teachers leave in the middle of

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this year due to student behaviors. I have witnessed teachers crying and trying to figure out how to make it through the day.

We have received informational sessions on adverse childhood experiences and trauma. I don't think there is anyone who would argue that these experiences don't have an impact on children. What have not heard is a plan to help. The other students in the class as well as the teachers are being traumatized. House Bill 5378 takes important steps in highlighting current problems with social and emotional learning but there is much that it fails to address. We must find a way to help all the students, the ones are acting out and the ones who have to witness it. Thank you to all the members of the Committee including our Windsor Representatives, Senator McCrory and Representative Gibson.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you so much for your description of what's going on in the classroom. I know I hear it from people in my own district and I just wondered; you say that we need more people who will provide social workers, psychologists for special needs. What else could go on in the classroom? What are your classroom sizes and how many special need students per -- per classroom would you advise us to look at?

STACEY PALEY: I am a regular education teacher. I teach 5th grade. I have 18 students. I have the smallest of the 5th grade classes. I have two

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students with IEPs right now but the student that I spoke is not identified in any way.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Just quickly, why not?

STACY PALEY: Academically he's able to do what a typical 5th grader is able to do.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): But he's not functioning as a typical -- he's got a behavioral health issue.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Wait, listen --

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): And I won't do anymore, thank you. [Laughing]

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): One of the things I heard you say that I think is working in some communities is partnering with nonprofit agencies, social service agencies in your community to help with the supports that you may need. I think that's an idea that we should visualize for many of our school districts. 'Cause there's a number of agencies -- I know actually, I forget the one in Windsor that does a lot of work with children in school, while they're in school and not just at the home and aftercare. But I think that's an idea that we should explore and find the resources to get those professionals into the school day where they're most utilized. Any other questions or comments? Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Kristen Lecco, Grandy Educator.

KRISTEN LECCO: Good afternoon. I'm Kristen Lecco and this is my colleague, Natalie Ferry. We've been teaching in Granby for six years at the elementary school. I've always enjoyed laughing, and playing and learning alongside with my students. I woke up every morning excited to go to work however, the

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past three years I have experienced much less laughter, play and learning. Every year I seem to have more students that are stressed, angry, hurting and yelling for help. I have parents calling to tell me that their student doesn't want to or doesn't feel safe coming to school.

I cannot deny their feelings because there have been times when I have felt like this myself. As I become more involved with CEA and legislative initiatives I'm hearing testimonies proving that I'm not alone in feeling overwhelmed, stressed and unsafe at work. I have personally experienced items thrown at me, been kicked, threatened and hit by my students. I have witnessed by colleagues get bit, choked, kicked, punched, threatened, etc., and worse I've watched social and emotionally challenged students destroy classrooms and lash out against other students resulting in them being feared and ostracized by their peers.

I applaud that the legislator's efforts -- I applaud your efforts to create a Bill in supporting teachers during this crucial time. I urge you to expand the scope of your Bill to think about providing funding to schools for more psychologists, social workers and special education staff. We must lessen our current support staff caseloads so they can manageably address our growing trauma population. Giving educators and administrators more PD alone will not be enough unless we have the personnel to help implement new initiatives and programs.

I sit here as the voice of many of my colleagues who are hopeful that if educators and legislators work together we can restore public education back to a

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time when all students and staff felt safe. Thank you for your time and letting me share my story.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Moral support? Okay. Any questions from the circle? Seeing none -- Gilchrest, Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not a question. I just want to echo what was said earlier that after a full day of work in a climate that I know you both are passionate about but also facing these struggles I really appreciate that you came here to advocate on behalf of the students and the families and your colleagues, so thank you very much.

KRISTEN LECCO: Thank you for having us.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions? Thank you, thank you for your testimony. We have Tom Nicholas.

TOM NICHOLAS: Good evening members of the Education Committee. My name is Tom Nicholas. I am the Vice President of the Connecticut Education Association. I'm here from Manchester with a certification in social work and education as well. While I recognize that HB 5378 is an acknowledgement that districts need to do more to integrate social and emotional needs into their learning and their curriculum. That is all it is, is an acknowledgement. There is no mandates, no funding, no proven path forward on how to successfully implement addressing the needs of dysregulated students in our schools within this Bill. The old adage of you get what you pay for rings to my ears with this Bill. The definition of that adage is

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less than or inferior to. Our children deserve the best education possible. Currently the state has an SEL collaborative that is digging into this matter to yield recommendations on how to best move forward, to serve our children and the state forming a safe and equitable compassionate learning environment. Why not wait for that collaborative to come forward with a plan. We have Mark Brackett in the state, Professor and Founding Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence who in his latest book, *Permission to Feel*, outlines evidence-based approaches to social/emotional learning that supports an entire school community.

This develops skills of emotional intelligence and positive school climate starting from the top and working its way down. I encourage you all to not merely scratch the surface but to take a deeper dive and invest in our schools, our children, our future and those who are taking the deeper dive in the SEL collaborative and the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. I thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. So I like what you said. So there's a Committee that's already studying this issue and there's a professor at Yale who is one of the leaders in this. And I think I heard you say we should wait and let's evaluate what comes out of the Committee and then take a deeper dive after we get a lot more facts; is that correct? Is that your assessment?

TOM NICHOLAS: Yes, as this Bill doesn't even scratch the surface as I said because there's no mandates, no money, no anything. It's just saying, hey you know why don't you look into this stuff and

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give teachers a PD, which is not addressing the needs with any kind of fidelity at all. So yes, I am saying if you have a group that's taking that deeper dive, why not wait to hear what they're saying?

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): How far are they from completing their work; do you -- do you know?

TOM NICHOLAS: Probably a year from now.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): And in the meantime what are some suggestions you might think that we could do or locally that could or should be done to address some of the issues that we heard today?

TOM NICHOLAS: Okay. So in the meantime, let me first say that this Bill really doesn't address anything in the meantime. You have, as Representative Cook brought up earlier, a lot of different issues such as kindergarten start time. I would say do away with any kind of standardized testing for kindergarten, right through 2nd grade as well as a reduction in bench mark assessments. Yes, we have to do SVAC in third grade but one of the reasons that I truly believe why we are seeing this -- dysregulation of students, not only in Connecticut but across the country is issues related to common core, expectations of children before they are fundamentally appropriate. So that would be a start. Including more playtime for these kids. They desperately need it.

Ratios you've heard about you know in terms of social workers, psychologists, counselors, trauma in classrooms. I would love it if we could have aces incorporated in some way in our school systems so that we know, okay these are kids who have you know

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a score of around 7. When forming classes that would be so critical because you may have some classes that have 10 kids with scores of 6 or above and the next classroom like 1. Reduce testing as I said.

Special education loads. The thing that you need to look at with sped loads is not only how many kids you're servicing as a special education teacher but your hours. That's something that often gets misconstrued because you could have a few kids whose hours are -- you know above what you have with you know a full classroom of sped kids. I spoke briefly about common core. I think that needs to be looked at much more closely and what our expectations of children are. Education funding of course. As I said, you know you get what you pay for. So if you're expecting great changes in what's happening in education but you're not going to any up, then you're going to get the same and there's that adage as well. If you're expecting different results while giving them the same stuff, you know what you get.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): THANK YOU.

TOM NICHOLAS: So those are kind of a few of them that I would change or address.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Yes, thank you for your testimony. I'd just to like mention that, thank you for mentioning the social/emotional collaborative. I know a lot of good work is going on there and this year I think they'll have a model school climate policy out but the work, the majority of the work will be going forward. I don't think the

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collaborative would object to this proposal in front of us and it does say shall on it. So it does have some teeth to it. But I agree with you, it's a much more complicated issue going forward. As I said previously, it's going to take all of us, all parties to look from k through 12 at the whole child, what the child needs and look at the classroom and what we can do to support our teachers. So I agree with you. Let's let the social/emotional collaborative do its work. It's made up of the educators, the professionals, people that are dealing with this. So I -- I agree with you on that, but I -- I might disagree a little bit; any time I see social/emotional learning and this Bill would at least begin to look at professional development. So I'm in favor of this proposal but also hear what you're saying about the social/emotional collaborative and its work.

TOM NIHOLAS: You know a one-time shot into PD isn't addressing SEL with any fidelity at all, so that's why I say, it really has no teeth because unless you carry out a program or address SEL in a comprehensive system you're not doing it with any fidelity.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions, comments? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

TOM NICHOLAS: Thank you all very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Violette Haldane.

VIOLETTE HALDANE: Thank you. My name is Violette Haldane and thank you Senator McCrory and members of the Education Committee. I am speaking in support of House Bill 5436, basically the education bill

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that deals with natural hair. When I told some people I was going to come and speak and write a testimony for this their first reaction was, why? We don't have a problem in Connecticut. My feeling is you don't have to have a problem, you don't wait until you have a problem before you start to address an issue. We don't want to be in the news like, you know the other states have been.

But my testimony is personal. Most people think this Bill is about black hair but I think it's really about anyone's hair or anyone's way of expression. I'm speaking as a mother of a son who has had lots of hairstyles and I just want to share with you what we learned as we went on this journey. When he was going to school the only choices he could made was his shoes, his socks and his hair. When he went to a Magnet he had a uniform. When he went to a private school he had a dress code so he really had no choice on how he expressed himself except through his hair and believe me, we had a lot of expressions. [Laughing] We went through the mohawk, we went through the afro, we went through the corn roll, we went through the twists, we went through it all.

But here are the lessons he learned. One was living with the consequences. Sometimes he made decisions that were not a good fit, he had to live with them. He learned patience. When you get that bad haircut that you think is going to look really good on you and it doesn't, it takes a while for your hair to grow back. He learned discipline. He wanted waves and when you're black your hair does not wave. [Laughing] You have to wear this rag on your head every night and you have to like brush, and brush, and brush. I thought he was going to brush all of

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his hair out but he wanted waves. So he did what he had to do to get those waves.

He learned how to speak up, he learned how to advocate for himself and he learned how to negotiate because sometimes the styles he wanted I was not in favor of. So it was his responsibility to convince me that you know, he could live with it. It was a good choice. And he also had to learn to ask for help. When he wanted corn rolls my fingers were not nimble enough to do that. So to some these hair choices may see inconsequential but when you're young and you only three choices a day that you can make this is a big deal to have power over your body. It allows you to express yourself. It gives you a sense of pride and it's just a good thing.

If he had been told that his choices were unacceptable, it would have really dimmed his spirit. Hairstyles is an artform, it's an expression of culture and it binds us because all cultures have braids. Whether you have a French braid that's European or you have your braids that are African American or you have corn rolls or you're Native American and you just have your one braid down the back. And it also lets us you know, respect our diversity whether you have an afro or you have a bob. So I just think this Bill is very important. I think it should be passed. We don't want to wait until there's an issue, and I thank you for your support.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Any questions, comments? Well Bobbi, why don't you start and then I have my commentary.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): I can imagine what they go through with their hair and believe it or not, and I haven't shared this with anybody, but I used to have an afro. [Laughing] It was big. And I wish I had that today because as you can see, you know it's going. [Laughing] I'm going to bring that picture and you'll see what I'm talking about. I do look crazy but -- but I used to -- you know, it was either an afro or I would wear my hair down long with a ponytail. I mean I went through all that back in the day but I think bringing this Bill out, it's so important that we stop this type of discrimination that's going on and I know that I fully support it and many of my colleagues do too.

VIOLETTE HALDANE: I hope this happens. Connecticut would be the fourth state if it passes.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): I'll just say, yeah, it's always a good idea to be proactive even though we didn't have a -- well we don't even know what kind of story you have 'cause sometimes they never make it to the media. It's just -- it could be a microaggression that happened at school so I'll just say, I am so happy Michael Jordan cut all his hair off. Oh, it made it so cool to have a bald head. [Laughing] 'Cause I couldn't get those waves. Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Oh wait a minute, wait a minute. All right, thank you. Who's up next? We've got Patrice McCarthy.

PATRICE MCCARTHY: Good evening Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel and Representative McCarty and members of the Education Committee. I am Patrice McCarthy, Deputy Director and General Council for the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and I commend you for your

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endurance on this long day. You've heard some of CABE's testimony on various Bills and you have our complete written testimony as well. I'd like to address Senate Bill 393. CABE strongly opposes this Bill which would create a process where a Board of Education would be required to sit as judge and jury with respect to a complaint made against one of their colleagues.

We know that good governance matters and we work with Boards of Education on a daily basis to help them be effective, local officials and we also appreciate the Commissioner's focus on ensuring the boards function effectively. However, this would establish an unprecedented process in Connecticut and would be extremely disruptive to local governments. Requiring that the Board of Education conduct an investigation whenever a complaint is made regardless of how frivolous that complaint might be, would divert their attention from their statute requiring role to implement the educational interest of the state.

The process that is established in this Bill is really similar to a criminal proceeding including a statement of written charges, the power to summon witnesses and require the production of documents. We are not aware of any other state using such a process and I have been in contact with my colleagues from around the country on this issue. What -- based on my research -- I know a comment was made earlier in the day that Boards of Education are the only body in Connecticut that cannot be removed by their colleagues. Based on my research what I found was with respect to the City of Hartford, under their Special Act Charter they do have the power to remove municipal officials other than the

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Board of Education. And I found a memo from 2015 from Allen Taylor who was then serving as the Legal and Legislative Council to the City where he said that the Hartford Special Act Charter Provisions were unusual among Connecticut municipalities. And he also noted that the statutes do not contain any grant of authority to municipalities other than if it's a Special Act Charter, to empower their legislative bodies to remove elected officials.

We would urge you to focus on improving and supporting Boards of Education. It's very important that they receive professional development and ongoing support and that you reject Senate Bill 393. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. I'm not quite sure, but I was under the impression currently is, Boards of Education are the only ones that you cannot remove. If that -- maybe I'm wrong.

PATRICE MCCARTHY: Based on my research I do not believe that that is true.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay.

PATRICE MCCARTHY: It was a specific case in Hartford but that was because of their Special Act Charter, but they do have the authority to remove other municipal officials, apparently other than the Board of Education.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay. So we have to dig a little deeper. You know, we'll -- we'll clearly do our homework on this piece of legislation. Any other questions? Thank you, Pat.

PATRICE MCCARTHY: Thank you very much.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Orlando Rodriguez from CEA.

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: Good evening, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Orlando Rodriguez. I serve as the Research and Policy Development Specialist for the Connecticut Education. CEA supports Senate Bill 394 and recommend enhancements.

The school building projects in HB 394 should be funded as requested. Also, we ask for additional language to fund improvements to indoor air quality in our schools. Across the state, existing school facilities require remediation of mold and other toxic particles in indoor air. In the Public Health Committee today, a Bill is being heard HB 5431, that specifically addresses sick school buildings. What we seek in this Bill SB 394 would complement efforts to improve the conditions of schools for learning. Funding for critical cleanups of existing school facilities may be harder to support than shiny new school buildings, but the remediations are no less important. There would be no increase in the state budget if school construction funding remained at the current level and some of the millions of dollars in school construction funding were set aside specifically for remediation of indoor air.

We also ask this Committee to close two loopholes in current statutes that create unnecessary barriers to school districts getting state funds to remediate mold when it is an emergency. First, in Connecticut General Statute 10-283(b)(1) provides funding to remedy a certified school indoor air quality emergency; however, the Commissioner of DAS can deny this funding. We ask that the statute be changed so

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that all applications for emergency funds shall be approved, if they meet existing guidelines.

Second in the same statute requires that a school district inform DAS within seven days of their discovering an emergency situation; otherwise, the district will not be able to obtain emergency funding. This is unnecessarily restrictive, given that many districts are not aware emergency funding is available to them. This Committee has a unique opportunity to remedy harmful indoor air conditions in schools across Connecticut without increasing taxes.

Separately I'd like to spend a little time with HB 5433. We --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Go ahead, summarize it.

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: Okay, real quick. We oppose the Bill like many others for many of the same reasons and if you can give me a minute I can hopefully clarify the issue between what it is -- whether it's predictable or not.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): We'll give him a minute, that's what he asked for.

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: There's been a lot of debate as to whether they're able to predict costs or not and it really depends on how you define predictable. The actuaries who did the study were not able to reproduce what happened in the past. In order -- and this is in the report. In order to do that, they had to create a variable that they modified in order to reverse engineer what happened in the past. So if you consider predictable being able to reverse engineer what happened in the past, yes, then the -- then it is predictable. But if you consider

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predictable being what's going to happen in the future, then it's not predictable. And I'll leave it at that, and we thank you for your time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, thank you for your testimony. Any questions?

REP. CURREY (11TH): Yes, please.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Currey.
[Laughing]

REP. CURREY (11TH): I appreciate that. I'd be interested to hear a little bit more. It doesn't necessarily need to be right now, as to where you have the information that something was engineered to manipulate data and all of that because we definitely have worked with actuaries, lawyers and everybody who has validated the information to say that this actually does work, so.

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: It's in the actual report.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Looking forward to having that conversation.

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): If you wouldn't mind just for a quick point of clarification. You mentioned, so would we need to look at statute 10-83?

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: 283.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): 283, to make an amendment to that statute. Are you talking about emergency plan for --?

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ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: Yes. Specifically in Statute 10-293(b)1 what it basically says is that the Commissioner of DAS may deny -- may approve funding. But we would like the may's to be changed to shall approve funding. So if the project meets guidelines, it's an emergency it gets funded. Nobody gets to say, no it's not going to get funded. Also in Statute 10-83(b)2 it says that a school district -- that school districts have up to seven days to inform DAS if there is an emergency, okay. If they take more than seven days then they will not be allowed to apply for funds. We just think that should -- there shouldn't be any limit like that. You know once they find -- that they discover something they should be able to report to DAS and many districts don't even know that this money is out there.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. Thank you, thank you for that.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Chris Fryxell. Chris from ABC? No Chris. Jessica Weaver, Jessica Weaver from Newington Board of Ed. No? Lisa Hammersley.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Good evening Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Lisa Hammersley and I am the Deputy Executive Director of the School and State Finance Project. I'm here today to testify in strong support of House Bill 5433 and the creation of a special education excess cost Cooperative, known as the COOP. Our organization began working on this solution after countless discussions with municipal officials and school district personnel that

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emphasized the hardship that unpredictable and volatile special education class have under budget and their ability to educate their students.

After discussions and examining the data it was found that while these costs are volatile on the local level they are predictable statewide. The COOP would bring this statewide predictability to districts and municipalities. Municipalities will know in December how much their community contribution will be for the following school year and districts know that no matter what their expenses are, 100 percent of their excess costs will be reimbursed.

The COOP is solely an education finance system and would have no role in the identification of students with disabilities or impact how services are delivered. Essentially the Coop acts as a risk pool that would be wholly owned by municipalities, school districts and the state and managed by a Board of Directors consisting of a majority of education and municipal stakeholders. The Board of Directors would also be in charge of determining how community contributions are calculated among many other decisions. The Coop has been extensively studied and analyzed and has been found by independent actuaries, lawyers and consultants to be feasible, solvent and create the predictability that municipalities and school districts across our state have been asking for.

While our organization is aware that the Coop is not a silver bullet that addresses all issues surrounding special education it is an important step forward that brings predictability and stability to municipalities in districts and ensures

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adequate funding for students with extraordinary special education needs. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. So earlier a number of superintendents came up and testified against the Bill and one of the -- one of the terms I kept hearing was transparency, transparency. Can you speak to the concept of transparency with this piece of legislation?

LISA HAMERSLEY: I would love to. So I believe that superintendents are concerned because there's no model that has been created to date that provides them with things that would show them how their municipal contribution would be calculated. And the reason why there is -- that information is not available is because there's no model that has been developed yet. It was decided that education stakeholders and municipal leaders, because they have experience with managing their budget should have the opportunity to develop the model that would be used to determine municipal contribution.

In addition I've heard some concern about -- concerns about the transparency with regard to the Freedom of Information Exemption. It is my understanding that the Bill is based off the Crumbling Foundations language. This would be a private nonprofit organization. As a result, those private organizations are currently not subject to the Freedom of Information, however there are numerous transparency components in the Bill that should satisfy any concern with regard to transparency, including but not limited to the fact that their financial audits would be made public.

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Their 990s would be made public. All public officials and state officials that serve on the Board would be subject to Freedom of Information.

In addition they have to report annually to you all, Education Committee, as well as the Appropriations Committee and there needs to be a public hearing. So there are a number of transparency provisions in the Bill that I think should give people some comfort. In addition, the State Department of Education would continue to receive all reimbursement requests and make all reimbursement determinations and the State Department of Education is subject to Freedom of Information. So the Coop is essentially just cutting checks. They're not making decision on who gets paid and what, so all of that information would continue to be subject to the Freedom of Information.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. And just my last question, you said that by December the school district would know how much their premium pretty much will be for the next school year; is that accurate?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: That is correct. The municipality will be made aware as to how much their contribution would be for the following fiscal year. So when they're developing their budget for the following fiscal year, they will know exactly how much they need to contribute for school districts to be reimbursed for 100 percent of their total excess costs.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): And my last question is, once they -- I'm going to just use insurance terms; once they pay their premium, whatever claims they

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have for the next year will be covered; is that correct?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: That is correct, in full.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: And directly back to the district.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Right. Any questions?
Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Lisa. Thank you for your patience, for waiting till this evening. Good to see you. And thank you for all the information you provided to me before this. Just a couple of questions for you. There is a reference -- rather late in the Bill, I didn't write down the line number but I'm sure you know it by heart, to the municipal, the eight municipal number groups that would be constituted. Can you explain more how that works, how they're chosen, how the groups are constructed and what their role is supposed to be?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Sure. So the incorporators that would establish the Board, there are incorporators that would be legislative appointments and the role of the incorporators is to go ahead and get the Board functioning and up and running. They would go ahead and group municipalities based on their population and their medium household income in the idea there is to try and get like communities put together in a group so that way you have eight member groups that would be formed. So you would have representation from various municipalities so that it is representative of the state. They would then choose who would represent them on the Board of Directors. So there would be eight of those

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individuals and the Bill specifies that may be a superintendent, a CFO of a school district, also a chief operating officer of a school district. So those eight members are really supposed to be education stakeholders that would have a voice on the Board of Directors.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So would there be sort of the criteria performing a group, is sort of similar to the Dergs the way they are currently?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Yeah, could be comparable. I know that Dergs look at socioeconomic status I believe. And so this would just be based off of medium household income and population, just to group municipalities.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And the other -- the other question I have for you is just to -- I want to confirm that I've understood this properly in terms of the order of things. Were the legislature to pass this Bill in a form similar to what it's in now, they would -- the legislature would be voting to create the -- or to implement the creation of the insurance Cooperative, the special ed Cooperative that upon passage and signature by the Governor and everything, the -- the Board would be appointed and with the Bill already passed and the legislation having become law, the Board would then piece together the formula and sort of modus operandi on what basis the premiums would be determined and the reimbursement would be allocated. And at some point during all of that process after the Board was appointed, there would be the -- the capital would be invested to cement the forming of the company; is that right?

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LISA HAMMERSLEY: That is correct. So after the Board determines the final model that would be employed to determine community contributions the insurance department would determine how much would be required for initial -- for an initial capitalization of the Cooperative. So there would need to be additional legislative action to provide that those funds that would be held in reserve for the Coop. It has been determined by the insurance department or opined that the Coop is very low risk, however, we don't know at this time how much that would be. They've estimated it to be as much as \$50 million.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And the -- and that would be, I guessing bonding I assume.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: It could be bonding or it could be provided from the General Assembly in a surplus appropriation or some other source, but yes.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Would you -- you talked about legislative approval of the disbursement of those funds. Would there -- is there any provision for legislative approval of the, for lack of a better word, formula?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: There is not. The Bill just has the Board determining the formula that would be employed, the additional legislative action that would be required prior to the Coop being actually up and running is that initial capitalization.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So it could exist sort of as the shell for some time.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: I don't know if you could have the Cooperative up and running without having the initial capitalization.

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REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So in otherward, the vote on the Bill would essentially allow the creation of a body of people who then would have license to come up with whatever formula they would want to suggest.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: That's right, and it would allow the creation of the Captive Insurance Company.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So in effect we're still left with the legislator -- legislature having voted for, if it were to pass, having passed a Bill allowing something -- well not knowing really what it's voting on when it votes.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Well it's voting on you know establishing the Captive Insurance Company, establishing the Cooperative and having the Board of Directors get to work in creating the final model that would be used to a few years from now create that predictability for municipalities and local school districts. There's a time lag between when the Bill, if it were to pass the General Assembly and when, you know the budget protection would actually be provided.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Is there something that is - - that would be illogical or counterproductive in the idea that those people to be nominated for the Board could be named ahead of time? Could come up with their formula and based on that the legislature could then take an informed vote on whether or not to create the Coop which would then be using that formula?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: I know that it has been opined by the insurance department in the past that, and I don't know if you're referring to actually putting the final model into legislation and making it, you

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know like kind of statutory but I know it's been opined by the insurance department in the past that the Coop Board would kind of need to be nimble and need to be responsive to changes, whatever they may be. And so similar to the Crumbling Foundation legislation that passed, it would be -- I believe in their best interest that -- like no statutory model be put into legislation. If you're asking do I think that the legislature should have to approve the final model before it actually is decided on by the Board of Directors, I mean that's a decision left up to the legislators. The legislators -- you all could also decide that you're going to decide on the model and you're going to put it in legislation. We were just being differential, or we think it's best for the education stakeholders and municipal stakeholders that manage the budget, they know what they're dealing with on a daily basis, to go ahead and put it together.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Which -- which I think is a -- well what I think is not the point, but I think that's an entirely reasonable assumption to make that the people who are involved know best. I'm just having trouble seeing a reversal of that sequence as logical and at least putting them to work at developing the formula -- again I'm calling it a formula, probably allowing for cases that perhaps in legislative language, allowing them in types of specified cases to make revisions. And the once there's something that people agree is workable, then to vote on the legislation to create and implement the organization would seem to make more sense and allow the legislature to vote on something that it knows and understands as opposed to something that remains totally undefined until

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after a law is passed. In otherward, instead of you know, it's going further than you have to vote on the Bill to know what's in it. It's you vote on the Bill and you still don't know what's in it. So I -- I would think that might put people's minds at ease a bit more. But thank you very much for your answers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Representative Billie Miller.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hi Lisa and thank you for staying so late. Lisa, I have a question. So the -- I'm told that the Coop will be set up like the Crumbling Foundation, correct? Is that correct?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Yes.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Do you know if the Crumbling Foundation if that was the model who was set, they knew what the model was before we decided to put it in legislation?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Are you referring to the model, Representative that was determined as municipal contributions?

REP. MILLER (145TH): Well for the Crumbling Foundation, right. So I -- I don't know exactly what that legislation looked like and so I don't know if there was a model or if it was just, this is what we're going to do, we're going to set it up and then after they've established it they left it to the foundation itself, Crumbling Foundation Board to decide on what it should look like.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: So the Crumbling -- or excuse the SS Cost Cooperative is kind of unique. It's the

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first of its kind in terms of using a Captive Insurance Company and high-risk structure -- excuse high-risk product structure to reimburse municipalities. The legislation, 5433, the enabling legislation and the creation of incorporators as well as Board of Directors, that is similar to the Crumbling Foundation language and that's what we mirrored it off. But the actual modeling with the community contribution, that is I think very different than the Crumbling Foundation legislation, which received and I'm not very well versed on the Crumbling Foundation specifics but they received bond dollars in order to provide the money that they would use to reimburse homeowners when they came forward with claims.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Mr. Chairman, I can provide a clarification if you --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Absolutely.

REP. CURREY (11TH): So, hello Representative. [Laughing] To answer your question, the legislature on an overwhelming bipartisan basis supported the creative of the Captive Insurance Company to deal with Crumbling Foundations and did not include the model because they left that up to people who actually knew and had expertise in that area to develop how that money was going to be dispersed to homeowners impacted by crumbling foundations, so it's actually no different than what we're proposing here today.

REP. MILLER (145TH): If I may, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, Representative Currey. And that's the point that I was getting at. I just needed the clarification because if memory served me correctly, we kind of left it up to the Crumbling Foundation

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Board to -- to create their model, so thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any -- anyone else? Thank you and thank you for your response. Thank you for your testimony.

REP. CURREY (11TH): I do have a question if you don't mind.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Oh, you had a question, oh I'm sorry, sir.

REP. CURREY (11TH): I just want to thank you and the organization for all of the work that you all have put in and for joining us around the state and meeting with as many different stakeholders as we possibly can to have folks understand exactly what this is and also more importantly sometimes what this is not. I was wondering if you might just quickly just talk about how that predictability and stability that the Coop would create, actually would benefit districts at the local level and the towns.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Sure. So districts would know in December how much their community contribution would be for the following fiscal year. Districts would also have peace of mind knowing that no matter what the Board -- or excuse me, the Board of Education expenses are for excess costs, that they're covered 100 percent. With regards to the Board of Education they will know that if they have an unanticipated expense arise through the fiscal year that they are also covered 100 percent for their expenses which allows them to provide the necessary services for this very high-need population as well as to not make reductions to their general education budgets

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in order to deal with any unforeseen budget deficits that arise through the fiscal year.

REP. CURREY (11TH): And offhand, do you know how many districts that actually had this happen as of late?

LISA HAMMERSLEY: I was actually just asked that this morning, Representative and it's seven that I've counted so far in this current school year. But there have been numerous cases through the years that were -- there's unforeseen excess cost expenses that they have to you know, make budgetary changes mid-year.

REP. CURREY (11TH): And just lastly, would you touch on the report with regards to that this is something that actually works as opposed to the assertion that something was manipulated to prove that this worked.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Yeah, I'm not sure what was being referred to there but our actuaries had information on statewide actual excess cost information and they looked back a number of years, I believe it was 10 years, and made projections for your out, a number of years out. And so I'm not what he was refer -- sure what he was referring to but we worked with the UConn Goldenson Center for actuarial science on our own prior to the task force being developed. Once the task force was created in 2017 there was an independent actuary that was retrieved -- or retained by the task force who looked at all of our modeling, all of UConn's modeling and generated their own modeling. So it's been verified on a number of occasions with all different models that this Cooperative provides predictability that we claim it does and that it's solvent long term.

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REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, thank you Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. And again, thanks for your testimony.

LISA HAMMERSLEY: Thank you very much, Senator.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Jan Perruccio. Jan? Okay. Dave Scata, Scata from Conn CASE. Is Stephanie Nivees from Faith Acts here, Stephanie? Okay.

DAVE SCATA: Thank you. It's actually Dave Scata, from Executive Director of Conn CASE and I have my colleague up here who represents both Conn --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Is that Katharine?

DAVE SCATA: That's Katharine Gabrielson.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right, cool.

DAVE SCATA: Yeah, we try to -- you know it's late, you know. We only have an hour to talk. You know we'll give you some time to ask questions -- [laughing].

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): You'll be talking to yourself. [Laughing]

DAVE SCATA: But first, before I even start I want to thank you for having that discussion about a month ago on special education that I was participating in. It's the first I've seen. It was great. I hope you have it again. I think there was a lot of information that was generated by that discussion, so I appreciate that opportunity.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you.

DAVE SCATA: I have a testimony that I'm not going to read 'cause it is late and I think the questions that Representative Lav --

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Lavielle.

DAVE SCATA: Lavielle, you really kind of hit it on the head, okay. I mean the issues that we have and I'm going to take a historical perspective from this. Conn CASE as well CAPSS as well as CABE and I can even say CASE really have major issues with this Bill. I was on the original task force to look at the feasibility study. At the end of that task force the only educators, and I have to say all of educators who were there really had some significant issues with the outcome of the task force inciting the same issues that you're seeing today. We have concerns whether -- how the formula is going to be generated, that we're not quite sure how it's going to be funded. There's discussion that one aspect of all the excess cost grant money, the \$60 million would be used as seed money for this Coop but additional money would be needed and how that's going to be generated, they're not sure.

There's too many unanswered questions moving forward. Yes they've developed formulas with actuaries and they've had other people look at this, but I think you need to ask yourselves why through this process whether we sited at the original feasibility study and every educator that came for you today is against this Bill. That's the question you should be asking. I mean why is it only an agency whose established this and worked with some of the legislators promoting something that they believe could have the answer. Now granted, I think conception to understand -- the concept that you would be held harmless and 100 percent would be reimbursed is a great idea, I'm just not sure of the feasibility of that.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Katharine.

KATHARINE GABRIELSON: Hi, I'm Katharine Gabrielson. I'm the President Elect of Conn CASE and I am also the Director of Pupil Services for Waterbury Public Schools and I'm here as their representative as well this evening. And I would remind you that Waterbury is an Alliance District and we stand with Conn CASE, CAPSS, CABE in opposition to 5433 for all of the reasons that have been noted by our colleagues over the course of the last 5-1/2 hours that we've been sitting here listening today.

We are also very concerned too about the makeup of the Board of Directors. Conn CASE does not have a seat at that table, nor does CABE. I did remember hearing Representative Currey say that CABE would be definitely part of that Board. Conn CASE would also want to be a part of that Board given that we are the administrators in special education. We have very serious concerns about the fact that you're talking about \$500 million of taxpayer funds going to a nonprofit agency that would be FOI exempt. We can't get around being concerned about that.

There are many issues that Dave and others have noted. I'm not going to regurgitate all of them. I'm not also going to read this testimony because again, it is late and we are appreciative of the fact that we've all been here for a very long time. But the biggest part that we have issues with is again, no model has been presented.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you.

DAVE SCATA: And if I can make one last comment. As you weigh your decision, please give as much weight

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to the public school administrators that have come before you today in talking about this Bill.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Representative Currey, do you want to briefly comment because I'm sure you have something to say.

REP. CURREY (11TH): I will keep it brief, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your comments. I know we met, we went through this all in an attempt to address a number of your concerns. You just mentioned the FOI piece and with the \$500 million and so with an entity that will be structured to simply cut a check, what specifically do you believe that might be of concern that you wouldn't know what was going on over at the Captive Insurance Company?

KATARINE GABRIELSON: I guess we would want to know how the decisions are being made about determining the equity adjustment, how decisions are being made about who is getting what and what districts might be getting less, what districts might be getting more, how those decisions are being made. Full transparency. It's taxpayer dollars. There shouldn't even be a question.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Okay. And so -- and you understand that this entity is still going to have to provide an annual report, come before the legislature with public hearings, have many conversations on all of this?

KATHARINE GABRIELSON: We do.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Okay. All right. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony young people and thank you for your response, Representative Currey.

DAVE SCATA: Thank you for your time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Up next, Valerie LePoutre from Nami-Connecticut. Lisa from Nami. No Namis? Anna Grad, Anna Grad. No Anna? Julia, Julia, I've got two different Julias here, Grywacz and Julia Nielson. They went? Oh, okay. Okay. We're cooking with hot oil Lisa Nee followed by Kathryn Meyer followed by Madeline Willet. I think that's a student. She might not be here. I'm sure she's gone.

LISA NEE: Hi, thanks. Batting cleanup here for everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to submit the testimony.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Your name is? You're Lisa?

LISA NEE: My name is Lisa Nee, yeah, sorry. Support 4, lines 113-120, of HB 7353. I want to show you a picture. I know it's hard to see, but the person on this side is my son. The other person is a race car driver. The trophy in the middle is for winning the Granite State series, which is a step below NASCAR. My son has been working with this incredible race car driver on the pit crew member. The problem is when both of them attempted to enter a technical high school they were discouraged from doing it because they both had IEPs. Yet in September of 2019, my son started on what I termed the grand experiment. After high school, we registered him in the Gateway Automotive Program in North Haven. It's a college level course. This is the textbook it is nearly two-

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thousand pages and weighs eight pounds. So, what happens when you take a student who has for his entire educational career has had a para with him, has taken only highly modified tests, and you put him in a college-level class without modifications. Well here's what happens.

In his first semester, my son received a B plus in the class of automotive. The next semester he is enrolled in the electronics course which is the most difficult course that they teach in that certification area and he's at an A minus. He also in his first semester got 11 certifications which he proudly posts on his wall, all without modifications, as an independent learner in a general education course. It's heartbreaking that during those important high school years when you are supposed to be making social connections and friends, my son was robbed of that opportunity. Instead, for seven years he was paired with the same wonderful three students, none of whom shared his interest in cars.

Here is what technical high schools can learn from students like my son. People who like to work with their hands also learn with their hands. These students are kinesthetic learners. Kinesthetic learners don't become proficient in reading and math through the methods taught in most general education settings. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is an astounding number of students in technical high schools with neither math or language arts proficiency. It is time that we stop living in fear of what students with perceived disabilities might do to the performance of a technical high schools and encourage those students to apply whether they have an IEP of 504 or just a driving

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interest in a career. Thank you for your time and I open myself up for questions.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you for your test -- outstanding. I really like how you placed it in layman terms and like the old school saying, where the goats can get it. Very good. Any questions.

LISA NEE: Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): I just wanted to comment. Thank you for being such a great mom and advocating for your child. I mean you don't see that a lot lately and it's hurtful, because I'd like to see more mothers come up and advocate for their children. Thank you.

LISA NEE: Well he had a very clear interest and I think that makes it easier for a parent to direct them, yeah.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just would also like to thank you for your passion and your advocacy and to hopefully helping us to change this policy. It will be due to parents like you that come forward and give us really the actual situations of what's going on, so thank you very much.

LISA NEE: Thank you, I appreciate it. Very good. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Kathryn Meyer.

KATHRYN MEYER: Good evening.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): It's your turn.

KATHRYN MEYER: Chairman McCrory and Chairman Sanchez, and esteemed members of the Education Committee. My name is Kathryn Scheinberg Meyer.

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I'm an attorney at the Center for Children's Advocacy and I look forward to speaking to you again about the issue raised in House Bill 5214. I represent low-income children with disabilities and these are kids who really, really need to a chance, fair chance to be accepted at technical high schools.

So because I had the benefit to testify on this issue last year, I just wanted to highlight two quick things for you today to kind of cut to the chase and underscore. So first, I just want you to note this discrimination and the omission of children with disability to technical high school system is still happening. It's not an issue that's solved. It's a current issue. You have testimony in your packet from a parent named Nicole Rivera from Trumbull. She has a son who has ADD and almost get a chance to flourish in the technical high school in which he is now. He's a 9th grade student. He's getting Bs. He's a member of the football team. He's you know really esteemed member of the community and it was due to Nicole's advocacy, to her emails, to the calls, to the letters that she wrote that really got him over that barrier because the barrier, I should that CTECs erected for him unfortunately. And we can talk more about that.

Secondly, I just wanted to underscore the point that PPTs make placement decisions in accordance with IDEA. The PPT is comprised of the people who know the child the best. They have evaluated the child, they provided services for the child. It is according to federal law that they make placement decisions. This is not a placement decision that should be made unilaterally by one entity that

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doesn't even know the child, does not have any first-hand experience with the child. And we know that not every child is a fit for CTECs and that's okay. Not every child is a fit for any particular type of school, but CTECs shouldn't be the one making that decision unilaterally and that's currently what's occurring. So that's why I urge you to repeal 10-76q(c) so you can level the playing field for all children. [Ringing]

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, perfect timing again. Thank you for your testimony. Oh, Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and welcome Kathryn. I think Justin wants to say something too, but can you just tell the Committee why, and I think there was some discussion earlier on looking at the removal of the entire statute. So could you just speak to that for one moment?

KATHRYN MEYER: Sure, I would say the entire statute -- the -- the beginning part of the statute is redundant. I mean if we're looking at a technical high school as the -- the district that is serving a child then all the things outlined in the beginning part of the statute are what they should be doing according to federal law and we don't have a -- we don't have a similar statute for LEAs in particular, we just have federal law that we follow. So I think the beginning, I think it's confusing that the beginning part separates technical schools as if they're not any other LEA that is required to identify, evaluate, you know provide programming and services. So I would say for clarity, probably the whole thing could be eliminated because it would

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just -- they would just operative like any other LEA.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. Thank you very much for that. And thank you for all that you do.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to say thank you for continuing to work on this past last session with those of us who are interested in making this move. And we know that the Tech systems have made moves around this in a positive direction to be a bit more inclusive, but why do you believe that it's necessary for us to actually take the steps now to update this statute rather than on just good faith that they'll continue to make those -- those positive moves?

KATHRYN MEYER: Right, I mean first of all I think it contravenes federal law. I think a lot of attorneys agree with that, a lot of advocates, a lot of folks in the community agree that it's -- it's the one kind of school that is allowed to say that we cannot serve your needs. There's no other kind of school that can do that. So we shouldn't want a statute on the books that contravenes federal law first of all.

Second of all, we're really appreciative of the tone that is set by the new superintendent of CTECs and we really believe that it is improving but that is tone set by an individual person. And so we need to make sure that this statute, this section of the statute at least is off the books so that you know, whoever comes in next, we're not at the whim of that person's setting tone or the -- the vibe that they're putting out for the district.

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REP. CURREY (11TH): Thank you. And I appreciate your willingness to want to be flexible with what it is you're looking to do here and I know Representative Cook isn't here, but she's been interval in this conversation that we've had and I think she's been one of the folks that we've had to kind of help get along to see where we're moving on this, but I think some of the conversations and work that we've done, I think we're going to be able to get there so thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions, comments? Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you for your testimony. In terms of accommodations for students that have some type of special need, would there be the capacity do you think the tech schools to be able to address those types of you know, capacity issues?

KATHRYN MEYER: Yeah, I mean I would say that federal law requires them to as it requires any other school that has to be open to serving kids with disability. And of course the PPT is going to make a placement decision based upon what is going to best serve the kids' needs in their programming. So I would say that they should be treated like any other school is and should have to accommodate those needs.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): There may be -- just to followup -- just to -- there may be some students who don't have the physical capacity and in that circumstance they wouldn't be considered; is that how the PPT would work?

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KATHRYN MEYER: I mean it's hard to say in a blanket way. It think -- I think if a student has an interest or the desire, you saw with Lisa's son, you know it is federal law that requires schools to meet those student needs as much as possible and that's a team decision and that should be made by the team that knows the child the best including the parent, the folks in the school who have worked with the child and all the different members who really know the child.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much. Thank you Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, thank you for your testimony.

KATHRYN MEYER: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay. We're going to the individual that signed up late, Megan Bennett. No Megan? Robert Goodrich followed by Terri DeBarro Garrity.

ROBERT GOODRICH: Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, thank you for hosting back to back public hearings. Friday and Monday is tough. That's the reason why I was late today and I really appreciate it. I'm here to testify in support of SB 390 and also like to recognize my former colleague, Representative Ron Napoli. We both worked in the Waterbury Public Schools for a while and he still does.

Race has served and does still serve on three bodies with the State Department of Education and the Minority Teacher Recruitment Legislative Task Force along with the Policy Oversight Committee on minority teacher recruitment and the school discipline collaborative. We're very active up here

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in Hartford and also in Waterbury on several key education equity issues. So school districts who are motivated to hiring black and LatinX educators are unable to because of the flaws in our K through 16 systems that create racist barriers for black and Latin students. They include the school-to-prison pipeline, large and pernicious opportunity gaps, but none more than the incredible lack of race-matched classrooms that we have here in Connecticut. So we know that in our fight to diversify our educator workforce that there's been one integral piece that has been missing from our legislative remedies and that has been a significant boost in funding. So -- and that's the reason why we fully support SB 390.

But we only encourage you to further narrow the responsibilities of the State Department of Education to conduct proper oversight and provide the department with robust regulatory powers over districts that continue to eschew the importance of diversifying their workforces. For instance, in Waterbury, the school district spends \$520,000.00 on placing police in our schools but then the district only spends \$261,000 of its Alliance District Grant on teacher diversity efforts. It's an unspeakable dilemma and one of the reasons racial equity is still just talked about and not achieved.

Additionally we urge you to emphasize the importance of holding our state's teacher preparation programs accountable for the decreasing rates of completion for Black and Latinx candidates in all of your legislative remedies for this educational dilemma.

Secondly we urge to emphasize the importance of holding our state's teach prep programs responsible for diversifying the workforce. In my testimony I included a recent project that we just concluded

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with the Urban Institute and Constance Lindsey, their lead researcher on this issue and it outlines the completion and enrollment ratios for the five largest teacher prep programs in the state. It's not good. It's pretty bad. And I'd like for these Bills to contain remedies around teacher diversity, to also address the two largest bodies that are responsible for increasing the pipeline. So I encourage some side conversations about the teacher prep programs based on that research that we've included and created a qualitative tool to analyze teacher candidate performance and experience at those five schools.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thanks for being patient. Any questions, comments? Representative.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Were you referring to Ed TPA as one of those prep tools or --

ROBERT GOODRICH: Well our standpoint on Ed TPA would be that any -- and the report given back to the legislature is very specific that the Ed TPA creates -- there's disparities between the successful completion between white candidates and black and brown candidates. Even though it says in that line it says -- I think it says, it's closing but there is a gap. So in our opinion anything that has a starting point of creating disparate outcomes for black and LatinX educators needs to be taken off the table just for that. I mean we're an abolitionist organization, right. We're not talking about reform, we're talking about transformation. So Ed TPA in our opinion, because it starts with disparities and is robust in there and should be

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eliminated. But we're talking about a qualitative tool that analyzes the teacher candidate experience from a social cultural perspective. We're good on the metrics in terms of quantitative data but we just don't know the experiences.

Like in our study with Constance Lindsey we found that the schools of education, the biggest ones, some of them are averaging less than one Hispanic educator completing the program. I mean, and it's even more desperate for black candidates than less than one, less -- less than one is their average so that's 0.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, yeah, thank you for sharing that. Because I totally agree. I think that the state of Connecticut can come up with its own tool and it should cater to hiring more and getting more students of color involved in the educational system to become teachers and be prepared teachers, so thank you for sharing that.

ROBERT GOODRICH: And I'd like to also say we need real incentives because these -- these candidates are entering a profession that has potentially traumatized them for 18 years, so we need real incentives.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): I'll tell you the numbers. The last time I checked which was about two or three years ago all our schools of higher education, private and public produced less than 22 candidates per year of teachers of color.

ROBERT GOODRICH: Yeah, I don't want to pick on the egg, but I think they received \$91 million and you think that they could graduate more than 10 black candidates from their school of education in a year

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and they can't, they can't, they can't. There's a big problem.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Well that's we're here to try to solve.

ROBERT GOODRICH: I encourage you to look at our research that we submitted with the testimony and come back with some questions and we can have an off line discussion about it.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for being patient. I think you may be the last person unless Terri is sitting over there. Oh, come on up Terri. You're -- you're between us and us going home. [Laughing]

TERRI DEBARROS GARRITY: Thankfully my iPad didn't die. Chairman Sanchez, Chairman McCrory and distinguished members of the Education Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify. This is the second time I've been so moved to take action. I've never testified before any Committee. The first time I was moved was to advocate for my son. My Terri Debarros Garrity and I' an autism mom to an extraordinary 10-year-old and I also volunteer as a parent ambassador the East Haddam Special Needs Parent Group. The group provides support to parents with special needs children by providing resources and informative content via Facebook, Twitter and local events that we get our parents together for.

I'm a former account director in the television industry and I've been away from my career for at least five years advocating for my family and for others. I'm here in support of SB 393. I'm here to discuss an issue which has been in the news a number of times across our state, that SB 393 would

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support. I'm speaking from my own experience which also serves as a shocking example of why it is important to hold all local Board of Ed members to the highest standards.

First, I recently became aware of a disturbing situation which surfaced last fall. Several East Haddam residents took screen shots of an offensive anti-Muslim Facebook post by our current Board of Education Chairman. It was captioned, it was a photograph of Archie Bunker, "so I'm expected to walk on egg shells in my own country just so I don't offend some sub-century Islamic goat humpers who ain't figured out yet this is the 21st century." Other offensive posts have also been made by the Board Chairman and received a like from another sitting Board of Ed member. Teachers and administrators across the country are subject to dismissal for this conduct. As a parent this is alarming as the Board is responsible for decisions regarding our special needs families.

Second evidence presented suggest that laws, regulations, codes of conduct and ethics are being extremely compromised by administrators in the District and some Board of Ed members. These leaders are responsible for approximately 1,000 students, oversee a budget of \$20 million and all aspects regarding education in East Haddam. In fully disclosure one of the cases involves my son. The judge, Ann Byrd wrote in her findings on our case, and I quote, "the failure to base this decision to slash the student's instructional program by half on any assessment of his needs resulted in a significant decline in educational services provide to this student and denied him educational benefit." On February 5 in response to

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a complaint regarding the implementation of related services in my son's IEP referenced in this case.

The state of Connecticut issued a letter to the East Haddam Board of Education stating that they were not complying with the 2019 court order. These extreme violations by high level administrators aren't acceptable. The policies in play did more harm than good as I helplessly watch my son become more dysregulated despite my efforts to get his program changed. The truth is my family is not an isolated case. In December I requested a meeting for an executive session with the Board of Education to address concerns my son's case has with relation to the budget, specifically financial accountability. I sat in on budget meetings to gain a better understanding of grants and overages. In January I received a letter from the chairman denying the request and wishing us future success in our school system.

At the following Board meeting after having read through the bylaws I asked for a detailed explanation. Instead of a response from the Chairman I received an email from the Superintendent inviting me to a meeting to discuss cost savings. The irony, the special education budget had already been severely slashed in recent years except for this year, possibly to the 2019 legal decisions. The bottom line is our state needs to have a mechanism in place to allow for proper investigation and appropriate consequences. While my comment has focused primarily on SB 393 but can also be applied to 5433 and 5378.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Please summarize.

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TERRI DEBARROS GARRITY: Both educational staff and parents have shared their concerns with me in our special needs parent group but the unfortunate fact remains that a solid resolution has not taken place and despite the law, many more won't speak out due to fear of retaliation or their silenced by nondisclosure. These problems need to be addressed and these Bills are a step in the right direction. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you and thank you for your testimony and your advocacy for your child and other children who are suffering from the same issues. Any comments? Thank you again.

TERRI DEBARROS GARRITY: I appreciate your time. Sorry it took more than five minutes.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): [Laughing] Not a problem.